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ABSTRACT

This book presents the results of a study of the British work camps that were initiated in the 1920s as a result of the political need to reduce unemployment among ex-servicemen and that evolved in 1929 into a national system of residential centers to "recondition" long-term unemployed men by exposing them to hard physical labor. The following aspects of work camps are examined in detail: origins of contemporary public training policy (unemployment and learning through labor, unemployment and social policy, work camps in public memory); work as punishment and Utopia (labor colonies before and after 1918); transformation of training after the First World War (changes in government policy, women wartime workers, veterans, juvenile training); education for imperial and countryside settlement; transference policy and the work camps; life inside the camps (recruitment, government, free time, and placement); women and the domestic paradigm (service and education, Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment, home training centers); protest and resistance; differing approaches to the pedagogy of labor in Canada, Germany, the United States, and elsewhere; and labor in the historiography of adult education. Contains 152 references. (MN)

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John Field

Learning through Labour

Training, unemployment and the State 1890 – 1939

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Preface

Education is in turmoil. Yet the present turbulence and change, rather than issuing in a new settlement, seem likely rather to create the unstable basis for yet further transformation, in ways which are inherently unpredictable. Turning to the past might look like a quest for a lost stability; and perhaps it is, though if I were to hazard any guesses at all about the future of education, my greatest confidence would be in the prediction that the questions which dominate this study — questions about how adults prepare themselves or are prepared for new work (control or creativity), the development of human rather than our depleted natural resources, and the meaning of different kinds of human labour — will also continue to dominate the debate.

Identifying important issues is one thing; writing about them is still a largely lonely task. Many people have given me help and support in piecing together this study. I would especially like to thank Steve Chambers, David Colledge, Mel Doyle and Anne Summers, who generously shared sources. I am also grateful to Alan Booth, David Crewe, Hywel Francis, Phyllis Hyde, Jean McCrindle, Tony Mason, Jon Schneer and Bernd Weissbrod, all of whom listened and shared information or ideas, but who bear no responsibility for my failings.

John Field
University of Warwick
January 1992

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Work and Learning: the origins of a contemporary problem

A public training policy is essentially a modern phenomenon. In pre-modern societies, the acquisition and transfer of skill was essentially a private matter between master and apprentice, coming under state regulation mainly in so far as customary systems were seen to cause other problems for the polity (such as vagrancy). States intervene to secure and steer the supply of vocational skills only when a sufficient number of citizens, representing sufficient influence, come to the view that the knowledge and know-how available in the labour force fall seriously short of that required in order to sustain a good and secure life for 'the nation'. Particularly is this true of Britain, where public training policies emerged in the late 19th century in response to bourgeois qualms about the efficiency of the German worker, and are now of course indelibly marked by the 'vocationalist' ideologies and practices fostered by consecutive governments since the 1970s in response to perceived 'skills gaps', themselves said to have arisen from such varied causes as youth unemployment, globalization of economic competition, rapid technological change, and the 'demographic time-bomb' of the 1990s.

For public policy debates to occur over training, the assumption must already hold that the human is an essentially malleable creature. That is, that we are not only capable of learning, but that the ways in which we learn may themselves be analysed, classified, and refined (and thus learned and taught). In this sense, training is unavoidably linked in its origins with the discovery—or invention—of education. As humanity released itself from the automatic solidarities and ascribed statuses of the pre-modern order, as a growing individuation of identity took hold, so the idea emerged in the work of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and others that each human could be shaped — and indeed could in part mould itself —

through planned and sponsored learning which followed methodological rules which were themselves knowable. Modernity should be understood, it has been said, as an 'educational project',[1] in which the capacity for learning by individuals thus becomes a properly public concern. Human malleability—and thus a science of pedagogy—at first applied to children. Only with the first great wars of the machine age did it become not simply desirable but necessary to apply pedagogy to the adult.

This study traces some near-forgotten roots of public training policy in an advanced capitalist, industrialized economy. I am concerned with the origins and development in inter-war Britain of a system of work camps, designed to reintegrate the long-term unemployed adult into the labour market. The focus is simple to explain. Public concern with the unemployed during the inter-war years reflects, I believe, an early symptom of what is increasingly the crisis of the work-based social order; it marks a collective 'learning blockage', where the strength of the work ethic inhibits creative thinking about alternative forms of living and ordering our common affairs, so that training policy was dominated by attempts to reinstate the centrality of work; yet at the same time, the training response was also a characteristically modern attempt to 'learn our way out of crisis', by investing—albeit in somewhat punitive and meagre a fashion—in human resources. The interest in work camps is equally simple to explain: here as in no other training institution the emphasis upon reintegration into the work-based social order was at its most clear, crystallized as it was through the potential for comprehensive domination which a residential institution allows.

Britain of course was hardly unique, though as centre of a world-wide imperial system it was particularly rocked by the inter-war dual crises of agrarian and industrial capitalism. But much the same was true of course of many other societies, and indeed work camps were established in Germany, Canada and the United States, all of which will be referred to at a number of stages in this book. However, in Britain the world crisis provoked less a reappraisal of industrial capitalism and a search for new ways of regulating labour, than an attempt to return to what was seen as

an older and more stable social and economic order. Training policy in Germany under the Nazis and the United States under Roosevelt was part of a mass crusade for national regeneration and mobilization; in Britain, training policy reflected desires to fan back to life what were, allegedly, the dying flames of the work ethic.

Unemployment and learning through labour

My concern is in the first place with experiences that have been quietly forgotten. They have been forgotten because they were the experiences of unemployed people, people who had no job and therefore were nobodies; they did not, in general, even join the unemployed marchers and thereby tramp their ways into history. These experiences were forgotten also because the forms which they sometimes took — work camps — evoke disturbing comparisons. In the second place, I am concerned to explore the relationships between different kinds of training, and to attempt to set them in a broader perspective, establishing both the particularities of policy changes where they occurred, and the degree of continuity and of 'innovation by stealth' which seem to have characterized training initiatives in inter-war Britain. Finally, the analysis widens its focus to take in experiences elsewhere, in North America and Australasia as well as in Germany, in order to establish what was distinctive about policy and responses to it in Britain.

What emerges is a constant preoccupation with what I now see as a kind of 'pedagogy of labour'. While labour in the form of a job is a goal of most educational practice and theory in contemporary societies, its use as a means of instruction is more rare. In élite education systems, such as the British boys' public schools, labour is essentially a voluntary activity, which you undertake in order to learn humility and to gain empathy with those you will govern. Elsewhere in the education system, labour as a means of instruction is usually reserved for minorities. Whether for paupers, prisoners and ill-behaved soldiers, or for the long-term unemployed, structured work was in itself held to have therapeutic power. From it, you learn not only how to work — the main ulterior

objective — but also acquire or reinforce other valued characteristics: dignity, responsibility, self-respect, membership of a wider community... in short, work is part of the reordering of identity. And in a world where individual identity is increasingly differentiated, work ascribes a public and readily understood status. Work as an instructional medium may convey, then, more than merely economic benefits.

As the work-ethic's place at the basis of western identities has been challenged, the pedagogy of labour has grown in scope and sophistication. Identity might be moulded with work as both pedagogic basis and as a positive goal. In our own time, positive attempts to shape identity through the pedagogy of labour have been imported into the process of initial schooling, characteristically by bussing pupils out for planned experiences of labour in other people's places of work. By implication, the negative pole — by which identity is also defined — is the place of non-labour, or in other words the school. Just as pupils are held to acquire undesirable attitudes and 'unrealistic' expectations from schools, so the unemployed are stigmatized as going soft from prolonged idleness.

Hence the role of work camps in their reintegration. Throughout the inter-war years, the culture of long-term unemployment was held to be an obstacle to national — even imperial — recovery and renewal. While recently-unemployed men (women too, though as shown later they were a case apart) could be upskilled by brief training inputs, the long-term unemployed had softened to the very core; only removal from the source of corruption — the community and family and dole queue — would produce returns to training investment. Culturally, camp life would also counterbalance the excessive isolation of the unemployed man, and prepare him for integration into the community of active labour. The views, morality and in short the identity of the unemployed were taken as the problem which residential training was particularly well suited to resolve.

Education through labour and for labour was the primary goal of the inter-war 'pedagogy of labour', mediated through an ever-expanding programme of residential labour camps. As a project, this was in itself contradictory, since the strongly hierarchical nature of labour-camp life

and society risked the recreation of the very dependency and lack of initiative which the programme was designed to overcome. In addition, excluding all educational content but managed work, from a later standpoint it looks decidedly old-fashioned. If all that was needed to overcome unemployment was learning through work, this seems grossly simplistic in the face of a growing mismatch between the demands of the ever-changing technologies and organization of the workplace and the pool of skills currently available in the European labour market. Work is still seen as a central pedagogic process; but, as 'work experience', it is subjected increasingly to organization, supervision, classification and assessment.[2] What we can hope to learn from a study of the interwar years, then, is a set of insights into the development of a contemporary educational paradigm.

Unemployment and social policy

If inter-war training policy was dominated at this level by what I have called 'the pedagogy of labour', it also showed the influence of other social and political forces. First among these were political calculations and social-policy concerns (which between them also spanned strategic attempts at protecting the social and political order). It would have been political suicide for any government to claim that unemployment was anything but an unmitigated evil. Its reduction was, for even the most cautious policy-makers, a touchstone for the judgment of posterity: in 1917, government planners were seeking to avoid the kind of disruption which had followed previous transitions from a wartime economy; subsequently in both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, which differed in almost every other way, the abolition of unemployment was reckoned a major justification for the planned economy.[3] Of course orthodox policy-makers were troubled by their failure significantly to reduce overall levels of unemployment, and after 1945 most people were determined that never again should such a dreadful waste and humiliation of human resources be allowed. Yet even in the inter-war years, the

challenge of unemployment stretched the British state to its limits.

It is not difficult to see why unemployment was feared by the authorities. It brought suffering—unacceptable in an established democracy to Christian consciences and vote-seeking calculations alike; it also created openings for challenges to the legitimacy of the capitalist order. In Britain, unemployment as a term had arisen in the early 19th century and became a major issue of economic and social policy in its own right in the 1880s.[4] Unemployed movements—campaigns and organizations representing and organizing among unemployed people, and defending their interests—developed at the same time, creating among policy-makers a new fear of a new type of social disorder and political turbulence.[5] In the field of social policy particularly, unemployment became a significant terrain for struggle between the dominant parties of government and the growing forces of organized labour, who were developing their own quite distinctive economic remedies for the reduction of unemployment—primarily, the abolition of capitalism—and social remedies for the miseries that unemployment created.[6] In the decade before 1914—a decade which witnessed violent and frequently politicized industrial unrest, the suffrage campaign, the struggle for Irish independence, and the emergence of the Labour Party as a real force in local politics—a carefully constructed settlement was reached on unemployment insurance and occupational placement, partly modelled on the much-admired German system, which seemed to provide at least potentially the basis for a wider consensus on social policy.[7]

But neither Lloyd George's welfare measures nor the German could cope with the persistently high rates of unemployment which appeared shortly after the Armistice and continued to dog governments throughout the next decade. Nor could British politicians look elsewhere for ready-made solutions to what was often presented to them as the breakdown of the insurance principle upon which the core of unemployment-related policy rested. In most other developed nations—France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States—unemployment relief continued to be largely a private matter, dealt with by trade unions, charitable activities, private savings, and, during acute crises, local government;

there were some central or local government responsibilities—some support for placement and job finding, for example—but not on the scale of the labour exchanges. While British and German public insurance systems were unequal to the challenge of sustained high levels of unemployment, they at least coped with the collapse of 1929–31 considerably more effectively than the private, piecemeal and often ad hoc relief systems of North America and Australasia. In the end, faced with continuing mass unemployment throughout the two decades, and not simply with the immediate crisis of the Crash, British governments backed away from the choice of abandoning the public benefit system, and opted instead to accept that the strict actuarial requirements of unemployment insurance had better be ignored.

This was not to say that the insurance system, and the values of human solidarity which sustained it, did not come under substantial strain.[8] And there were other planks to the policy: poor-law relief continued, in one shape or another, to play a part in responding to poverty; and private charity, if attenuated from its Victorian high points, assumed a new role in the guise of voluntary social service. There were different degrees of stress upon the system, including those created by persistent mass unemployment through the two decades, and those urgent strains posed by the sudden upsurges of 1920–22 and 1929–33, the second of which was common to all the advanced nations.

The social-policy framework

What themes dominated social-policy responses to the demands—acute and pressing as they were—created by the Crash? Those demands varied in degree and expression, as did the administrative systems which were expected to meet them. But the overall social-policy goals of western nations faced with large-scale unemployment were fundamentally similar, and had been to some extent anticipated in Britain by the crisis of the early 1920s. First, there was the need to minimize threats to the social order itself. These threats might be explicitly political: for example, the fear that communist, socialist or fascist political movements might

appeal to the unemployed, or to others suffering from the consequences of collapse or whose consciences were stirred by the sight of so much poverty and economic anarchy around them. Left-wing movements had posed this problem at the end of the first World War, in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States, and to a less extent in Canada and Australia; 'extremist' political movements continued to preoccupy governments throughout the interwar years. Less pressing, but no less alarming, was the possibility of new social movements—not necessarily linked to an avowedly political persuasion—among the unemployed themselves.

Threats to the social order encompassed more than the possibility of mass social or political movements. Few doubted that there was more than a passing link between the economic crisis and the growth of organized crime, though the question of whether criminality itself was caused by unemployment as such remained an open one. In the East End of London there was some overlap between the gangs and the British Union of Fascists,[9] while during five years of street-fighting among rival gambling gangs, Sheffield in the 1920s was occasionally dubbed Britain's 'Little Chicago'.[10] There was also the real Chicago, symbol of a gangland world where the norms and rules of everyday life were distorted into capitalist criminality, source material for dozens of pulp novels and popular films. Did unemployment cause crime, or did the criminal avoid real work? The answers were less important than the debate.

Finally, the unemployed quietly threatened the social order by the way in which they responded to their predicament. The gangs might be fearsome, but in their own way they endorsed the acquisitive ethos and protestant work-ethic of the western world; countless journalists were surprised by Capone's extremely conservative social and political views, and by his complete endorsement of the entrepreneurial ethic, but a gang leader could only get where he did by damned hard work, accompanied by ostentatious consumption of the good things of life. The unemployed, by definition, did not work. They had to be supported by the work of others, and hence were reviled as 'dole bludgers', 'scroungers', feckless

and idle—expressions which increasingly challenged the residual values of human solidarity which had in part inspired the public welfare system. Social surveys carefully measured the faltering flame of the work-ethic in the Rhondda and County Durham, in Washington DC and Port Melbourne, and sometimes found that the jobless were apathetic or self-pitying, that they lacked backbone and moral fibre, and that where many were unemployed there seemed to be little shame in the fact. In short, there was a problem not just of the pathological individual but of entire local cultures.

The first goal of social policy was to find ways of diminishing or containing threats to the social order. The second was humanitarian: the unemployed could not be left to starve, nor to rot into an unusable debris. Christian ethics forbade the allowing of neighbours to die, however much their plight was self-inflicted (and for many Christians, of course, unemployment was far from being either divinely or self-inflicted). Humanitarian responses could be found among Conservatives like Harold Macmillan, Liberals like Lloyd George, and Democrats like Roosevelt. Equally important, socialist politicians and voters—and socialist political parties achieved government in Britain, Denmark, Germany and France, and were influential at regional level in Canada and Australia—assumed that capitalism rather than human idleness created unemployment, and if it undermined the work-ethic among the poor it had never been encouraged among the rich. Humanitarian concern for the unemployed was, among communists, at least partly subordinated to the need to organize the unemployed for struggle against the social and economic system which had made them unemployed in the first place; yet even communist-led unemployed movements were also an expression of humanitarian concern, and in some cases helped organize direct relief in particularly needy cases; for example, the Unemployed Workers' Movement in Newcastle, New South Wales, provided boot repairs, clothing and food to the worst-off.[11]

Humanitarian concern also assumed completely apolitical forms. Voluntary social service, preoccupied during the War with the needs of servicemen, especially the injured, and their families, turned afterwards

to the neglected veterans of trench and fleet. It was a short step from there to concern for the unemployed. Despite a well-organized state insurance scheme in Britain, the long tradition of voluntary charitable activity was transformed into systematic social service, laying the basis for a native social work and social research tradition.[12] Elsewhere in the English-speaking world voluntary activity was necessarily concerned with the direct provision of relief; its inability to cope with the Crash disrupted the continuity which, in Britain, ensured its contribution to the development of professional social research and casework.

Of course, the two goals of social policy between the wars—preservation of the social order and humanitarian treatment of the unemployed—were linked. There was nothing odd in believing, as did Macmillan and Lloyd George, that treating unemployed men humanely was the best way to protect the social order from intolerable strain. Social policy goals also had to be consistent with economic policy goals. In the end, economic recovery was sure to solve the problem of unemployment; but policy on unemployment could also affect the rate and nature of recovery. Orthodox economic thinking, for example, led British policy-makers to seek to control levels of support to the unemployment insurance fund, even bringing down the Labour government in 1931, since over-burdening the tax-payer would simply hold back recovery. Proto-Keynesians, on the other hand, believed that relief at above subsistence level, combined with public works and vocational training, would hasten recovery and strengthen the economic base in the longer run. Communists and socialists sought to create a new social order which reconciled humanitarian values with economic efficiency; they perhaps more than any other political tendency defined utopia in terms of work, and saw full and productive waged employment as an essential element in the highest form of life to which humanity could realistically aspire.

The labour-market framework

Governments operated, under the pressure of crisis in industry and agriculture, to reform or reconstitute the workings of the labour market.

The protracted nature of the British crisis meant that labour-market policy assumed a particular significance, and indeed impinged upon a host of correlated economic policy fields: pricing policy and subsequently company reorganization in the basic industries (coal, cotton, steel, and shipbuilding), for example; regional economic policy, in so far as it existed; even, when it came to decisions upon the location of armaments industries, upon defence policy. Indeed, unemployment insurance and the labour exchanges were inspired partly by desires to remove friction from the working of the labour market and ease the movement of labour.

Initially, post-war labour-market policy in Britain was confined largely to managing demobilization and to the redeployment of particular groups (disabled veterans, women war workers, and juveniles) whose position in the labour market was affected by specific issues. As unemployment rose in the early 1920s, and as the crisis in the coal industry—viewed by government as a crisis of over-capacity and excessive unit-labour costs—intensified, so a longer-term approach came to make some sense. While public works were encouraged on a small scale, particularly when Labour was in office, no government was prepared to fund them on any scale and for any period of time, fearing that they would simply encourage the unemployed to stay where they were in the hope that something would turn up. The search for a viable labour-market policy turned increasingly on the question of whether surplus labour could be encouraged rather to move away from the regional concentrations of unemployment.

As outlined in Chapter 4, one early solution was sought in state-sponsored migration to the Dominions, which conveniently helped government meet a number of related policy goals: refreshing ties of blood with white nations which were expressing demands for greater independence within the Empire, supporting a continued demand for manufacturing exports, and appeasing the Imperial lobby, whilst relieving an overstocked labour market at home. But emigration could never be a large-scale solution to what was evidently a persistent problem; and after 1930, demand overseas fell to a mere trickle. Interest in internal

migration—'industrial transference' as it was known—became explicit from 1928, with the publication of the Industrial Transference Board's report. From 1934, the 'move labour' policy was combined with a limited 'move capital' approach, which saw some provision of inducements to invest in the 'Special Areas' combined with direct government investment in infrastructural projects and in relocated defence manufacturing capacity.[13] Training initiatives directed at the long-term unemployed were intended to underpin this rudimentary regional policy, both through encouraging labour transference and, in the later stages, through encouraging general capability and capacity for work whether in a new area or near the unemployed person's existing home area.

Between 1921 and 1939, the population map of Britain shifted its contours. London, the Midlands and the South-East all grew faster than the average; most of the older industrial areas grew by smaller amounts, while the North-East lost population, and that of South Wales fell by over eight per cent—in the Rhondda, by around one-third.[14] Little of this movement was due to government activity. Between a third and a half of those aided under the government's transference schemes returned home again; although it is difficult to be precise about the numbers who migrated voluntarily and under their own steam, they far outnumbered those whose movements were assisted. Government policy towards the staple industries, and in the 1920s particularly towards coal, was far more significant; designed to bring about drastic reductions in both capacity and unit labour costs, government policy in practice intensified the contradiction between official hopes for labour migration out of the depressed areas and the coalowners' Micawberish desires for a plentiful supply of labour in hopes of an upturn—and meanwhile to cow working mineworkers with the spectres haunting each pit top.

Labour-market policy was not, in Britain or elsewhere, shaped by a wider strategy for human capital development. That came later, after the next war. Even in coalmining, where government did intervene sporadically to provide a framework for output and price control,[15] and where new investment in plant was slowly transforming the character of the miner's labour, new developments in training were very much left to the owners'

initiative, supported where appropriate by local education authority technical colleges or by university mining departments. Elsewhere, interest in industrial training was equally limited. This was not for lack of rhetoric: the Balfour Committee on Industry and Trade, in 1929, asserted the 'supreme necessity in this period of rapid and insistent flux and transformation' of maintaining

> unimpaired the qualities of initiative and flexibility of temperament, the power of readjustment and adaptation, and the capacity of free and willing cooperation among all the partners in production and distribution. Any waning of these powers could only mean an increasing rigidity and ossification of economic structure, and a progressive enfeeblement of its vitality for which no measures of external support or defensive organisation could compensate.[16]

Yet no non-socialist government would have contemplated direct intervention in what they regarded as employers' private managerial concerns, and neither Labour government felt strong enough in parliament to do so. Local education authorities could, and did, support the development of formal training (usually at the apprentice level) through the establishment of technical colleges, but this was bound to be patchy in its impact. On the whole, British government focussed its policy attention on the training of those for whom it clearly had a direct responsibility: veterans, especially the disabled; displaced women war workers; state employees; and, of course, the unemployed; all in what a 1980s policy paper described as 'speculative training or training for stock'.[17]

In this, British governments were far from unique. If they paid less attention to the training of those in work than did, say, their German or Danish counterparts, this was a matter of degree; however, by 1929, the British system of training for the unemployed was more comprehensive than those of other European nations and could be contrastedwith a complete absence of any similar provision in North America or Australasia. The experience of a decade of persistent, strongly regionalized unemployment had shaped British governments' policies on the labour market in ways which were bound to be absent or ill-developed elsewhere.

The social-policy issues facing European, North American and Australasian governments, then, were common to all. Though they differed in intensity, and occurred within differing economic contexts, all faced the early symptoms of the longer-term crisis within the work-based social order which had dominated the European economy and mind since the onset of the modern industrial system. Fascism and Nazism to some extent apart, the broad ideological frameworks within which the responses were set were also, though again differing in many details, common to the main capitalist states, and indeed to most of the smaller ones. When we come to consider labour-market policy, though, significant differences emerge: the protracted nature of the British crisis, and the peculiarities of a wracked economy which relied heavily upon a narrow range of labour-intensive manufacturing industries, and the wide scope of the legitimation problem (encompassing Britain's domination in a world empire) produced a labour-market policy which—however hesitantly—provided a more comprehensive framework for planning than any other bar that of Nazi Germany. Elsewhere, the issue arose in the context of the 1929 Crash and its aftermath, and if anything was posed more acutely in agricultural and rural areas than in manufacturing centres. While we should, then, expect significant similarities in the responses to mass unemployment, their timing and the nature and degree of previous, inherited responses also shaped the eventual outcomes.

Work camps in public memory

In Britain, as in many other advanced nations during the interwar years, the path to utopia led fairly directly to the establishment of a public work-camp system. Indeed, Britain was among the earliest to open up state-owned camps for its long-term unemployed. Quite wrongly, work camps are usually thought of as a creation of Nazi Germany. This is misleading for several reasons: first, because government work camps appeared in Britain in the mid-1920s, and only later in Germany; second, because in Germany the work-camp system predated the Nazi seizure of power in

1933; and third, because many people confuse work camps—that is, residential and temporary institutions where you went or were sent simply to work—with the punitive concentration and extermination camps, which were more akin to permanent prisons or workhouses. This is not to say that work camps did not share some common features with the concentration and extermination camps, as with residential institutions of many kinds from private schools to prisons, but that the confusion of two entirely separate kinds of institution is not simply tasteless but distinctly unhelpful. Ironically, the literature on German work camps was at first dominated by accounts of the pre-Nazi camps, many of them written by old activists from the voluntary work-camp movements, who stressed their democratic and anti-Nazi character.[18] The rebuilding of memory has been a double one.

The confusion is, of course, sometimes intentional. Some confuse the work camps run for good Aryans by the Nazi Ministry of Interior from 1933, a straightforward extension of existing unemployment work relief, with the concentration camps established as penal labour settlements for racial misfits and subversives after 1933, or even the extermination camps opened from 1941; confusing the three serves one purpose, shoring up the feeble impression that the Nazi regime was the unfortunate victim of manufactured atrocity smears.[19] There is also, though, considerable distortion in the publications of the communist movement. To take one example, British communists made much of a statement in the final report of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance which praised the German *Arbeitsdienst* (Labour Service): 'In Germany and Sweden some considerable success has been achieved with voluntary labour schemes. The Commission feels that such schemes are strongly desirable in this country.' This passage was widely quoted in communist circles after 1933. For example, an editorial in the *Unemployed Leader* in 1934 cited it verbatim; that 'the Commission takes as their example the Fascist Labour Camps of Germany' was 'clear evidence... that this Government is moving rapidly towards Fascism in Britain'.[20] It might be thought that this was a temporary and unfortunate aberration, a by-product of Comintern sectarianism which would have

vanished after 1934. Not a bit of it: similar arguments, on the basis of the same quotation from the Royal Commission's report, were repeated over the next five years.[21]

The commission's report—bad enough, to be sure—was issued in 1932, a year before the Nazis came to power, and at a time when Arbeitsdienst—as the quotation itself made clear—was voluntary. Among those movements which worked with Arbeitsdienst projects were visionaries of both right and left, who saw their work camps as prefigurative forms of a communal world where all were, if not brothers, comrades. At the time the 1932 report was issued, the NSDAP's unemployed organization happened to be campaigning for a boycott of Arbeitsdienst, as was the German Communist party. Britain's communists were not alone, though, in their misuse or misunderstanding of Arbeitsdienst; inevitably, given widespread sympathy for Hitler in the Conservative party, it too was prone to endless uninformed or ignorant comparison. Even Anthony Eden got confused. Then a promising Tory backbencher and no stereo-typical Nazi-lover, Eden returned from a formal visit to a Civilian Conservation Corps work camp in the USA recommending fellow MPs to consider whether some 'parallel attempt' might be made in Britain; despite his visit, he still apparently believed that the initials CCC stood for 'Civilian Concentration Corps'.[22]

These associations are as inescapable today as they were in the 1930s. The British camps, though, were by no means the product of a totalitarian state; they were set up and developed by an established democratic political order, to help solve a particular problem. Essentially the camps were, as already indicated, an attempt to 'learn the way out of crisis'; they operated, not through terror, but through a 'pedagogy of labour' which used a minimum of coercion, and was generally deemed to work best when based upon a voluntary contract, freely entered into, between state and individual. At the same time, the pedagogy of labour acted in itself as a restrictive force, setting limits to the learning both of those who were its subjects and of the wider society. In this it was not entirely dissimilar to the voluntary Arbeitsdienst movement in Germany, though of course the German system was considerably less tightly controlled by the state

than was the British, so that many of the German camp movements were designed to function as experiments through which new ways of living could be learned. Similar intentions can be discerned in some of the alternative, voluntary camping initiatives in Britain, such as the quasi-ecological Grith Fyrd movement which sought to use the space opened up by mass unemployment to explore alternative forms of living in the margins of the industrial order. But the pedagogy of labour was common to all, by definition, and that is one focus here. The second common feature is, of course, the closed, remote and residential character of work camps: they may reasonably be described and analysed as 'total institutions', devoted to the observation, education, classification and control of their inmates' behaviour. From this perspective, the labour camps formed an unusually centralist and authoritarian intervention on the part of the British state—testimony of the extent to which the challenge of unemployment, at a time of considerable fear of mass radicalization, pressed even the British state beyond the previously established limits.

2

Work as Punishment and Utopia: labour colonies and the unemployed

As late as 1939, almost 100,000 Britons lived in what were known as as 'Poor Law Institutions'.[1] Work camps, in which the long-term unemployed were segregated into enclosed and isolated institutions, were in many respects a logical extension of the workhouse system. Nor is the connection simply one of logic: although the lineage is indirect, it is not fanciful to see the inter-war work camps as descended from the small number of 'labour colonies' which were opened up by the Poor Law authorities or by the larger charitable foundations like the Salvation Army, in attempts which started in the 1880s to transform the urban poor into small farmers.[2] As attempts to prefigure the good, productive and orderly life that was to come—be it christian or socialist—the labour colonies represented radical agrarian alternatives to the anarchy and degradation of the urban labour market, whose function was to transform adults into the model citizens of a better future.

A deep ambiguity ran through the labour-colony movement. A gulf separated the quasi-punitive approach of conservatives and the more emancipatory community-building of the socialists. As the most ambitious version of the enclosed and isolated institution of correction through work, the labour colony was associated with the late-Victorian perception of the unemployed as a half-human menace, prone to villainy and riot, bred among the rotting slums of 'darkest England'. Yet labour colonies were also propounded by a range of liberal and socialist social reformers, from Charles Booth through to George Lansbury. Both groups viewed unemployment as an urban phenomenon, and regarded conventional poor-law solutions as failures; they were also interested in land reform, seeing the aristocracy as both a parasitical drain upon the nation

and as the backbone of Conservatism. Simultaneously, Britain was suffering a protracted agricultural depression which left land and cottages unoccupied.

Advocates were able to point, as so often in social reform initiatives, to experience elsewhere—the best-known examples being in Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The secretary to the Royal Commission on Labour, for instance, argued that while the European colonies were neither self-supporting nor particularly effective at 'reclaiming' the colonists, they had demonstrated that it was at least possible to use labour colonies for 'the removal by this means of the contaminating influence of a section of the permanent surplus'.[3] If from one side it derived much of its impetus from fears of the 'residuum' who populated 'darkest England', the home colonization movement in its utopian form took much of its shape from the fears and hopes of agrarian radicals and social-imperialists as well as more conventional socialist sources.

Labour colonies: early days

Surveying the field in 1909, the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws identified nineteen labour colonies. Most belonged to the poor-law authorities. London's Central (Unemployed) Body had a 1,200-acre estate at Hollesley Bay on the Thames estuary, the Poplar Guardians a more modest farm at Laindon in Essex. Others were run by voluntary organizations: the 3,000-acre Salvation Army colony at Hadleigh in Essex, founded by Bramwell Booth in 1892 from the proceeds of the Darkest England fund, was the largest; the Self-Help Emigration Society ran a training and testing centre for the 'hopeless unemployed' at Langley in Essex.[4] Few survived the First World War (although Hollesley Bay, Laindon and Hadleigh all did), but the idea of reclaiming infertile human soil through hard rural work survived; in the late 1920s the Ministry of Health managed to persuade Fulham Guardians to open an Industrial Colony in an old workhouse building at Belmont in Surrey.[5] Considering

that no labour-colony policy was ever formally endorsed by government, it was remarkably widespread.

For the social policy opinion-formers of the 1880s, the labour colony was an attractive prospect, combining mandatory labour for the unemployed—and thereby a socially acceptable means of affording relief—with the possibility of reviving rural society and its values (real or supposed). It won the support of the economist Alfred Marshall, who in 1884 recommended voluntary transfer to labour encampments outside London which could employ men on labour-intensive and menial tasks; in the following year Samuel Barnett, warden of the newly-established Toynbee Hall settlement, urged poor-law authorities to open rural farm colonies to train the unemployed in rudimentary agricultural skills and the habits of industry. Charles Booth, social scientist and Liverpool shipowner, was more ambitious still: he hoped that what he called 'Class B' (an estimated 345,000 of the very poor, living at the margins from casual earnings and thus more open to training than the completely unemployable) would be exported from London to industrial or labour colonies, to be 'taught, trained and employed from morning to night on work, indoors and out, for themselves or on government account', far away from the demoralizing influences of the East End labour market. Booth's remaining category of the unemployed residuum (Class A, the 'will not works') were to be dispersed through coercion.[6]

At first, arguments on behalf of the labour colony came from middle-class voices. By the 1890s, though, the idea was attracting socialists: both Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald of the Independent Labour Party saw labour colonies as a way of removing surplus labour from the market, protecting other workers from the unfair competition of the casual and unskilled; the marxist Social Democratic Federation's early programme included 'home colonization', and it was an SDF Guardian who in 1904 proposed that Poplar purchase a second farm; while the Fabians had some misgivings, on balance they too regarded labour colonies favourably.[7] Few socialist leaders had much respect for the work-shy; like their constituency, they were largely skilled men who shared the work-ethic with its emphasis upon the simple human dignity

and worth of labour. In the heart of the East End, in Poplar itself, George Lansbury was to become the most committed long-term campaigner on behalf of home colonization, evangelizing among fellow socialists on behalf of a visionary ideal of the labour colony as a prefigurative model of a utopian socialist community where self-supporting paupers, both men and women, would be helped to leave the over-stocked London labour market, and taught to survive on the land.

There were, then, at least three distinctive visions of home colonization. At one extreme was the straightforwardly punitive detention colony advocated by the majority of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law. As Geoffrey Drage had pointed out in 1894, the punitive solution was unlikely to succeed in a society which, unlike most European nations, did not use conscription to recruit its soldiers and sailors, and where agricultural unemployment was a relatively minor problem; even stronger criticisms were advanced by Charles Loch, the Charity Organisation Society's influential secretary.[8] The idea of consigning the 'flotsam and jetsam' of the labour market to 'something like a penal colony' was, though, briefly revived in 1929 by Margaret Bondfield and Arthur Greenwood, to be rejected by the rest of the Labour cabinet with horror.[9]

Second, there were the reparative labour colonies advocated by Loch, Marshall and William and Charles Booth. Examples include the colonies established by the London Congregational Union in 1886, and Salvation Army from 1891, and a number of newly formed home colonization or emigration societies, as well as by a number of boards of guardians.[10] The intention here was less to punish than to reclaim and reform the urban 'surplus' or 'residuum', and prepare them for a life on the land, either as subsistence farmers or as waged labourers living on smallholdings. Imperial settlement was an important prospect to many of those who helped fund the reparative schemes.

Most visionary were communitarian utopians, like some of the socialist guardians, who saw the labour colony as an agent of social transformation. Lansbury maintained to the end of his life that Poplar's colonies at Laindon and Hollesley Bay were among 'the best pieces of constructive work that stand to the credit of my initiative', believing that 'with a

sympathetic Minister of Health men could have been trained to restart rural England.'[11] Of course, this was also Lansbury's indirect way of acknowledging that his original hope—to recreate through labour colonies the basis for self-sustaining and co-operative rural communities—had not been fulfilled. While a handful of labour colonies survived until the later 1930s, they did so largely as remedial centres for the most hopeless of London's paupers.

Early setbacks

Labour colony campaigns, in any shape, never won central government support. After the issue had been publicly aired at intervals between 1888 and 1893 by the Whitechapel Guardians, the Local Government Board agreed in 1894 to consider applications from boards of guardians who wished to set up their own colonies (Whitechapel had started sending paupers to the Self-Help Emigration Society's Langley estate); Poplar asked in 1895 whether it might purchase 280 acres in Essex to start its own colony, but was turned down. The Poplar labour colony at Laindon was only opened in 1904, after Lansbury had persuaded an American soap-manufacturing millionaire and patron of the Philadelphian Vacant Land Cultivation Society, Joseph Fels (who had befriended Keir Hardie during an American lecture tour), to buy the estate and lease it back at a suitably low rent.[12] Fels transferred a second estate, Hollesley Bay, to the London Unemployed Fund in early 1905; encouraged by the Unemployed Workmen Act, the Central (Unemployed) Body which had superseded the Fund applied for permission to take over ownership of Hollesley Bay; John Burns at the Local Government Board agreed with extreme reluctance. It was a decision that Burns increasingly regretted as he visited the Poplar colony at Laindon, the West Ham Distress Committee colony at Ockenden, a private colony at Osea Island, and a place at Letchworth where several hundred London unemployed had been sent for work and training. Burns denounced the colonies as personally demoralizing and economically wasteful, refusing further applications

from the local authorities and turning down another offer of land from Fels.[13]

Any hope that the labour colony might become the core of local government strategies for dealing with unemployment did not survive an enquiry into the administration of Laindon in 1907.[14] The Poplar board continued to press for an extension of the movement, linking the colonies to its case for a London poor-law union that would share the rate burden more fairly between poorer and richer boroughs,[15] but nothing came of it. The emergent programme of Liberal unemployment legislation, grounded in the work of Booth and Beveridge, was certainly concerned to rationalize the labour market; but the idea of the labour colony was tainted by the ill reputation of Laindon and Hadleigh and by the association with pauperism. The main drift of the Liberal legislation, establishing unemployment insurance and labour exchanges, was to enable the respectable worker and the trade unionist to survive cyclical unemployment with dignity intact, and find work as and when it became available—a programme well-suited to appeal to those workers who were seen as the bedrock of Liberal voting in the cities and who needed to be kept away from Labour.[16] Labour colonies were decidedly not a part of that project.

The labour-colony movement failed for a number of reasons. First, there was no real alliance between the three discrete groups who had supported the early initiatives; lacking obvious common ideological or programmatic ground, they were if anything suspicious of one another, and were unable either to lobby or to campaign effectively. Land-reform movements also lost ground as agriculture picked itself up after 1896 from the depths of the 'Great Depression'; in so far as land reform remained popular, especially in Wales and Scotland, it was absorbed into the mainstreams of popular Liberalism and Labourism. Nor was the movement able to convince respectable workmen that colonies were a solution to unemployment per se; thus although the Poplar Guardians did win limited support amongst Labour Guardians in London, the movement had extremely limited support in the provinces, and was soon displaced in the minds of trades unionists and provincial socialists by the

debate over Liberal proposals for a national system of unemployed insurance and labour bureaux, while it was not sufficiently punitive to attract the Webbs and like-minded Fabians. Further, the costs of establishing and then maintaining residential institutions, often at some distance from the cities, were prohibitive; even Fels' generosity had its limits. Finally, the taint of maladministration that clung to all poor-law initiatives soon spread to the Poplar colony at Laindon, and even Hollesley Bay. Even if the case for using the unemployed in their utopian experiments had been stronger than it was, the socialist labour-colony argument would have fallen with the general breakdown of poor-law politics in the face of an increasingly centralized welfare system.

Labour colonies after 1918

Yet the idea of re-education through labour was so deep-rooted that pockets of support for labour colonies survived throughout the inter-war years. As late as 1931, the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance thought it worthwhile to ask local authorities what use they currently made of labour colonies, and whether they would wish to take up places in any expanded facility. Amongst those who replied were Bradford, who sent 'youths and young men who... have had no regular employment since leaving school and... are not amenable to discipline' to Wallingford Farm Colony for training, while Greenock Corporation made use of an existing farm colony, established by the parish council in 1927;[17] London County Council too still had three colonies in operation (Belmont Industrial Colony, Hollesley Bay, and Dunton Farm Colony near Brentwood).[18] Such commitment rested on a firm belief in the re-educative virtues of hard work, and exposure to rural values.

The majority of local authorities who responded to the Royal Commission, though, were at best doubtful about the value of sending their able-bodied poor to labour colonies. For most Labour councillors, unemployment benefit was every jobless worker's right; the 'pedagogy of labour' was a punitive stick, reserved for the underclass—those who were wilfully out of work. Cardiff, Dundee, Northumberland, Newcastle

and Lanarkshire councils expressed limited interest on this basis, but felt that the numbers involved would be small. As Lanarkshire put it,

> There is no general need for the treatment of unemployed persons in Lanarkshire in labour, detention, or penal colonies. It might be an advantage to have a ... labour colony for the training of any person or persons of the non-labouring class, such as hawkers and young men who have never been in regular employment ... in which such men could be trained and workers tested.[19]

By 1931, rather than an exercise in community-building, Labour councillors were seeing the labour colony in traditionalist terms, as a diagnostic and quasi-punitive experience appropriate only to vagrants and other 'won't works'.[20]

The labour colony died as precursor of a new moral world; yet neither did its role as punishment and retrainer attract support from more conventional and conservative authorities. Even after responsibility for Poor Law administration passed to the Ministry of Health after 1918, the poverty, parsimony or indifference of local Guardians of the Poor overcame attempts in 1922 and 1924 to exploit the labour colonies—and especially those serving London—as a way of shoring up the task-work principle.[21] In 1929, Fulham was persuaded to reorganize Belmont as an industrial colony, subsequently handing it over to the newly created London County Council to train the able-bodied poor 'to establish themselves as independent wage-earners outside'.[22] But by then the question of the labour colonies had become submerged in the wider issue of task work: the Ministry's tenth annual report noted 'a certain amount of deprecation of the enforcement of the requirement' amongst many boards of guardians, and within a little over twelve months the whole question of task work was under review; as a result the Ministry issued a general ruling in favour of 'courses for developing manipulative skill, to physical training, and to educational classes', with no mention of residential training.[23]

Increasingly, the surviving labour colonies were marginal. Laindon, by 1928, was a refuge for older men,[24] while according to Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Hollesley Bay's inmates, receiving little real agricultural

or horticultural training, were returning 'to the London scramble for unskilled employment, and presently reappear as applicants for Outdoor Relief'.[25] Lansbury was told by a government spokesman in 1927 that Hollesley Bay's greatest difficulty 'lies in the low quality of the men who are selected for training at the colony by London Boards of Guardians'.[26] Although the colonies drifted on into the later 1930s, their role was minor; they had no place in the Unemployment Assistance Board's scheme of things, and they had ceased to play any significant part long before their final demise.

As unemployment rates rose sharply in the late 1920s, some individual colonies briefly thrived. Imperialist movements ran a number of colonies, but more for pragmatic than utopian purposes. In 1928, the Industrial Transference Board discovered some half a dozen private charitable farm colonies, training men and lads for a life in the colonies: the Church of Scotland's training farm near Stirling had a capacity of some 30 at a time, the Hudson's Bay Company had a farm colony in Bedfordshire with space for 50 young men, the Salvation Army still took in some 850 lads yearly at Hadleigh, Dr Cossar's at Craigielinn took 200, the Church Army farm took 100, and the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society trained a further 80 at its Staffordshire colony.[27] Pragmatic reasons also accounted for a temporary recovery in the pauper colonies: by 1928, the total capacity of the three London colonies was 1,333 (150 places at Dunton Farm Colony, 330 at Hollesley Bay, and 853 at Belmont); Hollesley Bay held an average of some 298 to 366 (a sharp rise from 1923, when occupancy had fallen to around 280) and Belmont a staggering 744 to 998 (from a low of around 430 in 1923).[28] But by February 1931, occupancy rates had fallen once more, with 293 at Hollesley Bay, 63 at Dunton and 323 at Belmont; Hollesley Bay still had around 200 men in training in 1934.[29] By the mid-1930s, though, the wider ideological claims of the labour colony movement had all but vanished from sight.

The internal regime

Daily life in the labour colonies was organized around the practice of work. Yet, unlike the Ministry of Labour, the poor-law authorities retained an interest in education—at least for the younger inmates, so that although everyday life was dominated by the pedagogy of labour, it was interspersed with other institutional demands and activities. Administratively, the public colonies were expected to operate as relief camps: that is, poor relief was granted on condition of attendance, the work test thus being applied in a highly visible and increasingly punitive fashion.

The National Unemployed Workers' Movement interviewed a number of men who had been through Belmont Industrial Colony, concluding that the training 'boils down to mending boots for, and supplying food, brushes, mattresses, etc., to the LCC's Institutions, any excess being sold, and doing all the odd jobs connected with Belmont itself, from knocking sheds together to sweeping the boards and cleaning the windows.' Yet even here, one young interviewee described the daily routine as centred around school rather than work:

> Make your bed before breakfast. Breakfast at 7.15 a.m. and hang around till 8. Then go to school or to work. For me, 8 o'clock school. Break 10 to 10.15. Carry on till 12 - knock off for dinner. Start again 1 - school up to 2.30. Go out to gym from 2.30 to 5, tea. After 5.15 we can either go out or go to the recreation room, where we play darts, read paper or book. At 8.30 the supper bell goes. We are not forced to have supper. Then we carry on till 9.30 usually, except Thursday and Saturday, 10. o'clock. Lights out at 10.30. All have to be in before 9.30 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday. Thursday and Saturday night 10 o'clock. Sunday night 9 o'clock.

'Belmont lads' were watched by the police when they walked into Sutton; the food was scanty; clothing was rarely washed; there was no privacy in the lavatories.[30] At Hollesley Bay, with its wireless and billiards room, life was said to be somewhat easier. Yet the day started at 7 am and ended at 5 pm; half of the weekly allowance of 2s 6d (12.5p) was paid in tokens.[31] According to the Webbs, the main form of outdoor labour was fruit and vegetable growing.[32]

Institutionalization was, it seems, comprehensive—helped no doubt by the colonies' physical and cultural isolation. Discipline at both Belmont and Hollesley Bay was said to be harsh.[33] Institutional control was also made easier by the low status and individual passivity of the inmates; paupers do not normally make effective rebels, and recorded protests were few. There was a short-lived strike at Hollesley Bay in May 1922, partly over wages and partly because the trainees were being reclassified as agricultural labourers and thus losing entitlement to unemployment benefits in the future.[34] It seems that this event was exceptional, made possible perhaps by the combination of unusually high unemployment with industrial turmoil in the early 1920s, so that strike activity might well have seemed a sensible and feasible option to inmates who were far from the down-and-outs that supposedly were passed to the colonies in later years.

Even the availability of external resources did little to generate overt resistance. During the early 1930s, the Communist Party started taking an active interest in the surviving colonies. In particular, the Party briefly focussed its criticism on the two colonies managed by the London County Council, which had recently fallen under Labour control. Wal Hannington, organizing secretary of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, published a pamphlet exposing conditions at Belmont colony, and in April 1935 a 'squad of young worker-cyclists' from the Young Communist League fly-posted the area and held a street rally in nearby Sutton. The campaign won enough support within the Labour League of Youth and some Co-operative guilds to alarm the London Labour party, who in May published a pamphlet defending their record, pointing out that recruitment was voluntary, that the training was useful and combatted 'demoralization', and that in short Labour had transformed Belmont since being elected; this was unlikely to satisfy the NUWM, who continued to denounce Belmont as a source of cheap labour for the LCC and of ready recruits for the armed forces.[35]

Yet even for the communists the colonies were a peripheral issue; whereas the instructional centres were to recruit from the fringes of organized labour, particularly in the coal and cotton districts, Belmont

and Hollesley Bay were sent the most casual and marginalized of the workforce.

Politically and ideologically, the labour-colony movement collapsed before 1914, and despite Lansbury's best efforts it never revived. Rather, the public colonies survived mainly because they provided a temporary form of task work, tightly supervised, for the most 'incorrigible' of the young male unemployed; the private colonies survived because of their association with the dominions (and their recruitment of lads, rather than adults). Even had the movement won wider support, cost alone would have deterred all but the largest local or regional bodies, effectively limiting the public colonies to the London poor-law authorities and the London County Council. Lansbury's utopian alternative to the workhouse was soon set aside. In practice, the labour colony movement led to the foundation of a small set of soon-vestigial institutions, inspired by characteristically late-19th-century solutions to late-19th-century problems. Labour colonies were a way of reclaiming, punishing or marginalizing a weakened yet menacing residuum; they were never intended to be applied to the regional and structural unemployment of the coal, cotton and shipbuilding areas between the wars. Certainly the Ministry of Labour never claimed to be revitalizing the labour-colony tradition when it opened the Transfer Instructional Centres. Nor, for that matter, did Grith Fyrd when it opened its alternative communities in Derbyshire and Hampshire. Those involved might have been aware of the colonies, but their influence, if any, was largely negative. Tarred with the brush of the Poor Law and tainted by local-government corruption, functionally they were biassed towards testing and punishing rather than reclaiming the marginal worker.

3

The Transformation of Training after the First World War

Before 1914, attempts to teach the unemployed out of the ways of pauperdom remained the preserve of local government or voluntary organizations. Central government, and the policy community generally, remained sceptical in the face of claims that the unemployed adult could learn his or her way out of poverty and despair. War, and not the labour market, demonstrated through necessity that adults too could learn, and the First World War saw adults struggling to acquire new skills and capabilities on a comprehensive scale. In addition to the discovery of adult learning, the war also brought experience of a new managing role to the state, national and local. After the war, the central state acquired a continuing role in the retraining of the adult worker: the wartime experiences gained by the civil service, particularly in the Ministry of Labour, in steering and managing the labour market were carried over into the new and turbulent circumstances of the immediate post-war years, for between 1917 and 1920 British political leaders believed they were dealing with a crisis, the outcome of which would determine the future of capitalism.

The crisis came in three sharp phases, each with its own characteristics. First, it was taken for granted from 1917 that the war had derailed old patterns of peacetime economic activity; even if the main goal of policy was a return to the old pre-war days, some kind of forward planning was widely accepted as necessary, including planning for the labour market. Servicemen and -women would return to normal civilian life, which implied one level of planning; but the state had now acquired responsibilities which were to cut across the labour market, from decontrol of the coal industry to the transfer of women munitions workers. In the event demobilization plans had to be implemented in an

unstable political environment, in which the subordination of labour to capital could not be taken for granted; the industrial unrest of the pre-war years reappeared, alongside a massive extension of citizenship, particularly to women but also to many working-class men; Soviet bolshevism provided a further unpredictable and destabilizing factor.[1] And to political uncertainty was joined economic instability; a short post-war boom disappeared in 1920, and by winter 1921 there were over two million insured workers registered as unemployed, and the unemployment insurance fund was running a £116 million deficit.[2] Attempts at planning had rapidly been overtaken by events.

Early government training-policy was profoundly shaped by this turbulence. Conventional wisdom saw state intervention in the economy as a necessary evil in time of war, to be abandoned on return to peace. Nevertheless, good practical reasons could be found for moving cautiously. Regardless of the political task of securing Britain against bolshevism, even the most hardened free-marketeer accepted that the state should shoulder all responsibility for those whose chances in the labour market had been sacrificed in the war; the most significant of these were the veterans (especially the disabled), displaced women war-workers, and from 1921 the younger unemployed. None—except perhaps veterans—was thought likely to provide fertile ground for bolshevism, but all were handicapped in a peacetime labour market that would ideally be highly competitive—as, from 1921, it largely turned out to be. Training policy was directed towards these groups as part of a wider process of managing the transition towards a peacetime economy, but as unemployment stubbornly mounted after the brief post-war boom, so the confidence and experiences gained in retraining these special groups were selectively applied to the long-term unemployed.

Government training policy after 1918

Even before the war ended, it was clear that central government action would be needed to manage the transition to a peacetime labour market. Massive dislocation could only be avoided, the principal of Ruskin

College argued in 1917, by a state-led policy framework to tackle the entire range of problems:

> the replacing in industry of some millions of men from the army; change of occupation for some millions of men engaged in the production of munitions; the finding of employment for men and women who have acted as substitutes for those who left work for the army; the finding of employment for men who are partially disabled; the settlement of the question of the position of women in industries which they have entered for the first time during the War; the problem of the training of boys and girls who have been hurried into industry without adequate education.[3]

In the event, the problems were far worse than envisaged. The elaborate manpower plans of the Ministry of Reconstruction were trampled under foot by short-term cost considerations.

The confusion surrounding government labour-market plans is illustrated by the story of demobilization. Drawn up as early as 1916, with an eye to the mass unemployment that had followed the Napoleonic and Boer Wars, the plan was to release men in stages, according to industrial requirements rather than length of service. First for release would be 'demobilizers', men whose civilian roles would enable others to be released in turn. Second were 'pivotal men', whose skills and jobs were deemed vital to reconstruction. The total of these two categories was not to exceed 150,000 men. Third were 'slip men', able to provide written evidence that they had a job; fourth came 'non slip men' who had worked in vital industries but had no specific promise of a job. Finally, 'others' were to be released by trades in order of importance. Later was added a decision to release coalminers as soon as possible.

Within a month of the Armistice the system was under strain, with reports of indiscipline and vandalism at French bases. By February, after a series of mutinies, the plan was replaced by something closer to a 'first in, first out' approach.[4] Attempts to control the flow of ex-servicemen on to the labour market, and to use the demobilization scheme as a vehicle for labour-market planning, failed, thanks partly to government's desperate desire to influence the 1918 election campaign, and partly to anxieties that mutinous troops might prove unreliable in confrontations

with 'bolshevik' movements at home. By 1919, as the civil economy got under way, politicians forgot earlier concerns lest veterans be demobbed on to the dole queue; a relatively high, non-contributory Out of Work Donation was agreed as a purely temporary expedient to tide the unemployed over the immediate dislocation. The broader assumption was that, with 'bolshevism' contained, market forces would return the economy to pre-war 'normality' sooner rather than later.

Public training policy, in this context, inevitably had less to do with restructuring the labour market than with reverting to the pre-war status quo. The first major initiative was aimed at directing women wartime workers straight back into the home. Next, veterans (especially the disabled) were offered general handicraft training intended to fit them for unskilled or semi-skilled labour (this did not of course apply to officers, who might apply for a state bursary for university study or teacher training).[5] Then, as unemployment figures started to rise, the government encouraged local education authorities to offer basic initial training to unemployed juveniles, again less with any particular occupation or industry in mind than with the intention of maintaining elementary 'employability'.

Women wartime workers

Government training policy was initially focussed on women workers who might be displaced from industrial occupations when the war ended. In general, of course, women stood at the margins of official concern about the labour market, and they occupied a central place between 1918 and 1920 only because male politicians of all shades were desperate to reinstate women in the domestic sphere. The post-war training programmes for women were regarded as a purely short-term, temporary measure. The agency which administered them was not a government department, but a semi-autonomous body, originally appointed in 1915 to facilitate the movement of women into wartime industrial occupations. The Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment was initially asked to operate on a purely ad hoc basis after the armistice,

then re-appointed on 5 January 1920 'to consider, devise and carry out special schemes of work and training for women unemployed, or women whose capacities or opportunities have been injuriously affected as a result of conditions arising out of the war'. Appropriate work for women was of course domestic labour, whether as housewives, as paid domestic servants, or — less frequently — as midwives, nursery nurses, masseuses, and other low-status caring professionals.[6]

A complete dependency on the Ministry of Labour, reinforced by its provisional status, characterized the Central Committee throughout its life, into the Second World War. From 1918, the committee ran non-residential training centres, sometimes in co-operation with local education authorities, initially offering two types of courses: 'Homemaker', for skilled workers who wished to resume their old job once work was available, but meanwhile were in the home; and 'Homecraft', training women for domestic service, and requiring an undertaking to enter service as a precondition of acceptance. The Ministry of Labour, whose £50,000 grant was earmarked for homecraft courses, first set the agenda by appointing an enquiry, of eight women, to consider ways of using the unemployment insurance system to encourage unemployed industrial workers to enter domestic service;[7] it continued to use grant aid to restrict the Central Committee's training provision, with a brief exception under the 1924 Labour government when 352 women were given clerical training and 145 other forms of individual vocational training; despite the protests of the committee, the old restrictions were renewed from 1925.[8] At each stage, the committee's good intentions were obstructed by the dead hand of the Ministry.

Home Training Centre courses were invariably voluntary. Recruitment was normally through local employment exchanges, with selection in the hands of the women's sub-committee of the Local Employment Committee.[9] Eligibility was restricted to unemployed females aged between 16 and 35 (later extended to 45). Courses lasted between eight and twenty-two weeks, with a norm of three months; trainees received no benefit, but were entitled to an allowance of £1 weekly for adults, 15s for the 18 to 21 year-olds, and 10s for girls; from this sum was deducted 2s

weekly towards the cost of the uniform, and 2s 6d for lunches. The centres' ethos was described in 1934 by two American observers: 'Under conditions approximating as closely as possible those in typical middle-class British homes, trainees are instructed in cooking, table service, laundrying, and other duties of a capable housewife or servant.'[10]

There was never any question of offering training in skills which might have been used in those expanding industries that increasingly employed substantial numbers of women. Other than occasional and limited programmes of clerical or nurse retraining, the committee was effectively restricted to the (re)training of housewives and domestic servants—a restriction that in its origins might be explained as part of a wider strategy designed to contain and then control the (male) working-class movement; but the restriction lost none of its force after 1926, when industrial militancy offered little threat.

Regulation of female labour was one way in which unemployment pushed forward the frontiers of the British state. The restriction to domestic service imposed a number of new duties upon labour exchanges. For younger women in particular, for example, aftercare was thought an important corollary of placement in work. According to the Ministry of Labour,

> Special precautions are taken ... in placing girls and young inexperienced women at a distance from their homes. References are taken up, applicants are carefully selected, the girls or young women going to London are met on arrival, and care is taken to supervise and befriend the girls, and put them in touch with some club or other local organisation for social intercourse.[11]

About two-thirds of the homecraft trainees were known to have secured posts on completion; interestingly, up to a quarter of homemaker trainees also opted for a life below stairs.[12] At no stage, however, was the committee able to expand its programme beyond this narrow, traditionalist occupational base; indeed, it more often spent its energies arguing against the ministry's attempts to cut its existing programme for women.

Endless funding uncertainties compounded the constraints. In March 1926, the committee's forty-five centres were often run by volunteers,

and its total government grant fell £2,000 short of expenditure; the government proposed further reductions.[13] By 1927, when there were twenty-five centres, Margaret Bondfield described the committee as in 'a dire position'. There was no continuity among teaching staff, who could rarely be engaged for longer than five or six months at a time; and the narrow focus upon domestic service was 'a grave mistake, and a disaster'.[14] By 1928 the committee was running thirty-one home-training centres, eighteen of them in the distressed mining areas; the government had also agreed, with finance from the Australian states governments, to support an 'experimental' residential home training centre for intending emigrants who undertook to accept work as domestic servants; the centre opened in Market Harborough in September 1927.[15] By this stage the central committee had become bound up with the wider issue of labour transference, internal and overseas; but while men were to be trained in order to remove artificial frictions from the labour market, women were trained in order that they be confined even more tightly to one small enclave of the labour market, so that even when trained for the colonies, they were trained as farmers' servants and wives.

Throughout the inter-war years, the Ministry of Labour used women's training to extract women from the wider labour market and return them to essentially domestic roles. This was so even under the Labour governments of 1924 and 1929–31, when merely marginal adjustments were made to allow the central committee to offer slightly broader forms of vocational training. The numbers undertaking clerical or individual vocational training under the first Labour government were far short of the hundreds who took homemaker courses each year or the thousands who took homecraft training; in the early 1930s, when small numbers were retrained as waitresses or hotel clerks, the majority were quite literally being domesticated. The Ministry of Labour played its part in helping to meet the much-bewailed servant shortage, and men benefitted from the removal of potential competition in the industrial labour market. It was a form of labour-market management that was resisted constantly by the central committee, but ministry control, exercised through earmarked funding, was decisive.

Veterans

Initially placed under the War Office, responsibility for training ex-servicemen was handed over by Order in Council (thus precluding parliamentary discussion) in May 1919 to the Training Department of the Ministry of Labour. Two categories were involved: men disabled at the time of their discharge from the services, and those who because of enlistment had missed opportunities for apprenticeship or other civilian initial training. The disabled, it was clear, came first.[16]

By the end of February 1928 49,809 ex-servicemen had completed industrial training courses since their commencement in August 1919; a further 23,240 were taking one.[17] Though it was hoped that private industry would train the majority, in the event most were placed in technical colleges or Government Instructional Factories (originally established to turn out semi-skilled munitions machinists and taken over by the Ministry of Labour in 1919). Initially open to any war veteran without a marketable skill, from October 1921 entrance was confined to pensioners with at least 20 per cent disability.[18] Starting with five instructional factories, by the end of 1920 the Ministry had fifty-two. As unemployment rates rose, the courses turned increasingly from engineering to 'handyman training, designed to enable men to work largely on their own account or to obtain jobbing work with small employers'.[19] As training shifted from job-specific skills to more generic 'handyman training', and as the number of untrained disabled veterans started to dwindle, so the ministry began to transfer lessons learnt in this field to the wider problem of the young male unemployed.

The Ministry of Labour's work with disabled ex-servicemen through the instructional factories had a number of longer-term consequences. In 1924 the Ministry reported that, although the trainees were all 'men broken by the war', they had demonstrated considerable aptitude for learning:

> One feature which impressed itself upon all concerned with the Training Scheme was the marked improvement both moral and physical which took place in the great majority of the men.... Most of the men when they

> entered training had passed through long periods of treatment or unemployment or both. They were not used to the discipline of factory life and their value as productive units and as citizens had been greatly impaired.[20]

The result, according to R. C. Davison, was an important breakthrough in educational theory and practice in which 'it was conclusively proved that men and women, past the age of apprenticeship, could be fitted for ordinary production work by training, not in the factory, but in special training institutions, whether State or private.'[21] In a working factory, such men would be treated as nuisances; in a sheltered environment, supervised by skilled trainers, they proved capable of learning.

It was an important lesson, applied from 1925 to younger unemployed men more generally. While at the War Office during the 1924 Labour government, the mining MP Jack Lawson had developed proposals for 'a great training scheme' for the unemployed. Lawson's plan gathered dust, but in 1925 the Ministry of Labour announced the 'experimental measure' of opening four centres for handyman training for young men who, thanks to war and depression, 'have had no practical experience in the use of tools, and have never acquired the habits and discipline which come from regular work'.[22] Six-month courses were offered at two non-residential centres for general handyman skills, and at two residential centres in agricultural handyman skills, with half the places reserved for would-be emigrants. Trainees had to be unemployed, aged 19 to 25 (the upper limit was 29 for ex-servicemen), unskilled, and if not intending to emigrate they had to live in what the Ministry described as 'certain industrial areas'; in return they received their unemployment insurance entitlement (with the exception of overseas agricultural trainees, who received 5s weekly allowance), food, and free travel to and from home.[23]

None of the centres had been purpose-built for training. On the contrary, they were obvious stop-gaps. Of the two non-residential centres, Birmingham had been a munitions factory, then an instruction factory from 1919, while Wallsend was an old skating rink. Claydon residential centre had started life as a workhouse before being used as an instructional factory, while at nearby Brandon the Ministry, jointly with the Forestry Commission, bought a vacant country house and its estate.

By spring 1926, the total capacity was 1,200 places. Most of the eighty-three instructors had worked for the Ministry before. 'Strict discipline is maintained,' stated the Ministry, 'and the instructional course of any man may be terminated summarily for bad timekeeping, unsatisfactory conduct, lack of diligence, or other cause.'[24] It was, then, a modest scheme, vocational only in a general, largely attitudinal sense, developed on a tight budget and using plant and staff that lay to hand.

Nor were the new centres an unqualified success. Although, as Davison pointed out, the early intakes were 'hand-picked from hundreds of stranded youths in the derelict coal areas', well over one quarter of those enrolled by November 1926 dropped out; of the rest, 1,239 found work (250 in Australia and Canada), and 407 went back to the dole.[25] Dismissals for 'unsatisfactory conduct' were particularly high at Claydon. Worse, residential courses were expensive: overseas trainees' net costs per capita were over 45s weekly at Brandon and over 53s at Claydon, while those destined for jobs at home cost from 39s to 40s weekly—comparing badly, as Viscount Sandon and Major Ruggles-Brise pointed out in the Commons, with the Salvation Army's training farm at Hadleigh (net costs per trainee of a mere 30s).[26] The Ministry, though, claimed to be delighted by the results, reporting that trainees 'have taken most readily, indeed enthusiastically, to their work, and the regular hours and discipline, with the new hope of employment which the training opens up, have changed their outlook on life.'[27] In 1926 the ministry decided, reluctantly, to continue the scheme as an experiment only; by 1927 it effectively became permanent, and despite a reduction in course length, the programme slowly continued to expand until it the government economy measures of 1931, recovering in 1936, when skill shortages were being felt in manufacturing and parts of the service sector.

The Government Training Centres were directly born out of earlier training programmes for ex-servicemen, particularly the disabled. Their importance lay less in their actual achievement—they were too few in number ever to make significant inroads into the labour market—than in the discovery that adults were capable of learning in an appropriate environment, and in their growing emphasis upon personal discipline

and general aptitude as they extended their purlieu beyond the ranks of the veterans to embrace increasing numbers of young unemployed men. The shift in clientele was similar to that in the case of the home training centres, as the focus of policy implementation moved away from the immediate dislocation of the post-war years to a more general attempt to solve the problem of unemployment through labour-market training. But whereas for unemployed young men the perceived problem was that of inculcating generic employability through 'handyman training' and work discipline, thus reducing friction in the labour market, training for women was directed towards a narrow range of domestic occupations, waged and unwaged, that it was hoped would remove some workers from the wider labour market entirely.

Juvenile training

The third group for whom government recognized some responsibility was unemployed juveniles. Like women and disabled ex-servicemen, young workers were seen as a particularly vulnerable group, at risk from all kinds of anti-social influences, on whose behalf the state might reasonably exercise at least a paternalist vigilance and support. The influx of young workers into the wartime economy inevitably threw large numbers on to the labour market, with no or few recognized skills, immediately the war ended; in the event the situation among youngsters was worse than expected.

Unlike women and ex-servicemen, unemployed juveniles (that is, fourteen to eighteen year-olds) were primarily the responsibility of local government. Shortly after the armistice, central grants-in-aid were made available to local education authorities to establish Juvenile Unemployment Centres, attendance at which was compulsory for those aged 15–18 who received the temporary Out of Work Donation, and from 1920 for those claiming unemployment benefit. From May 1919 the JUCs dwindled after cuts in central funding; after the disastrous winter of 1922 grant-in-aid was increased to 75 per cent of running costs. The centres were conceived as temporary measures; the teachers worked on fixed-term

contracts, attendance was often short-term, accommodation was dire. By late 1923, some seventy-five centres coped with 6,500 youngsters—less than 5 per cent of all unemployed fourteen- to eighteen-year olds.[28] Only in the later 1920s did the JUCs receive stronger support from local authorities and government, and from 1934 fourteen-year olds came within their remit. Although their title was changed, in 1930, to Junior Instruction Centres, their popular name of Dole Schools remained.

Average attendance at the 'dole schools' was for three hours a day. Participation was so short-term and irregular and staff appointments so insecure that a standard curriculum was virtually impossible. The most common subjects were said in 1925 to be:

> Boys:
> Physical training, arithmetic, English comprehension and letter-writing, wood and metal work, practical and technical drawing.
>
> Girls:
> Physical training, dancing, drawing, singing, domestic subjects, hygiene and baby welfare, arithmetic particularly related to household accounts, English comprehension and letter-writing.

There was also some instruction in local history, travel and, apparently, citizenship.[29] In short, it was a largely remedial and gendered programme, designed more to keep the young unemployed off the streets and ensure some regulated activity in return for benefit than to offer serious training. With the recognition from 1928–29 that the crisis was not temporary, and with the emergence of a slightly more sophisticated regional manpower policy after the Report of the Industrial Transference Board, juvenile training became a rather higher priority.

1918–28: the beginnings of a training policy

In the aftermath of the Armistice, training policy was—partly perhaps understandably—myopic and incoherent. Subsequently, it was a classic example of the way in which the politics of the British labour market developed through a process of disjointed incrementalism. Programmes

consisted almost entirely of a series of under-funded, short-term and ill-co-ordinated initiatives, often funded—perhaps to placate the Treasury—on an 'experimental' basis. The three main categories of trainees for whom the government recognized some responsibility were all regarded as handicapped in some way because of the unusual labour-market needs of war time. Women and juveniles were drawn into manufacturing, only to find themselves unwanted in peace time; ex-servicemen equally lacked the skills and experience needed to compete effectively in the peacetime labour market, especially if they had been disabled during the fighting. The state accepted some degree of responsibility for re-equipping such people for the peacetime labour market, if only in compensatory ways as with youngsters, in restrictive ways as with women, and in increasingly generic ways as with ex-servicemen.

Uncertainty was compounded, of course, by the fact that the Ministry of Labour was itself launched as a temporary creation. Further, its prime responsibility formally was industrial relations; although the bulk of its work concerned unemployment and its management, its senior staff and its organizational culture were both inherited from the former Employment Department of the Board of Trade.[30] Yet, paradoxical though it may appear, training policy was largely delivered through temporary functions acquired by this new ministry whose prime purpose lay elsewhere, and whose very right to exist was still being doubted (by the Treasury, amongst others). Moreover, the definition of the ministry as centrally concerned with industrial relations ensured that training policy was dealt with by civil servants who were relatively junior, did not have particularly promising career prospects, and certainly did not have the ear of ministers.

In each case, short-term training measures designed to deal with the return to peace—or to give an impression of trying—were adopted then, later, adapted. The frontiers of the state were pushed forward incrementally to deal with the practical problems of mass unemployment, immediate and then continuing. Seat-of-the-pants policy-making, through ad hoc changes to existing practice, designated as purely 'experimental', left Britain by 1928 with a labour-market policy that was effectively

steered by civil-service opinion, largely formulated within the Ministry of Labour. Politically, inordinate attention was paid to the need to stop 'abuses' of the unemployment insurance system, and hardly any at all to the needs of the jobless for vocational training that might offer a secure place once more in the work force.[31] The result was a curriculum which was highly gender-specific, and also age-specific. For juveniles, 'dole schools' offered a somewhat vocationalized extension of the initial curriculum, within the framework of a structured day.

For women and ex-servicemen, training took the form of work, simulated or real; for women, the work was supplemented by verbal explanations, lectures and even films; for the men, the early 1920s saw a growing differentiation between those who continued to receive some kind of skills training, with guidance and supervision, and those who were deemed to have deteriorated through idleness, and thus became subjects of the new residential work programme. For this latter group, nothing could teach the basic virtues as efficiently as a hard day's work.

4

Education for Countryside and Empire

English is one of the few languages in which people have learned to use the word 'peasant' as an insult. Yet if we have somehow picked up a contempt for the country bumpkin, many of us still feel that the destruction of the British peasantry was somehow almost a personal loss; a nostalgia to which our little gardens, our allotments and our Sunday migrations into the hills all bear witness. And it is remarkable how often it is that personal-change movements involve what we still think of as a 'return' to the land—not only in Britain, but throughout the urbanized world.

In feeling our separation from the land as a damaging loss, we share one of the most potent imageries of inter-war European society. Many Britons yearned for a thriving rural population at home, in England and Scotland and Wales. Unlike the towns, rural environments were deemed healthy for both the body and the mind; camping, hiking and gardening all thrived as remedies for the illnesses of the 20th century. The 19th-century dream of learning once more to live from the land has never died, and some, like Grith Fyrd, pursued it with a visionary energy that was clearly utopian. But modern, 20th-century Britain also had access to land—vast tracts of it—in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and, though to a far less extent, South Africa, in all of which the descendants of British emigrants were held to lead healthy outdoor existences, living the lives of free men and women in an imaginary landscape of meadows, mountains, rivers and prairies on which the sun proverbially never set. A source of human resources during wartime, and of food and raw materials in peace and war, the white Dominions offered both a foundation for utopian thought and a dumping ground for surplus Britons.

Ideology aside, imperial migration and land settlement offered the possibility of a practical solution that was at least worth consideration.

Between 1922 and 1930, empire settlement was pursued intermittently by government as a means of relieving pressure on the home labour market. Imperial visionaries like Leo Amery also argued vigorously for increasing empire trade as a means of resolving harmoniously the growing economic difficulties. As under-secretary to Lord Milner between 1918 and 1924, then Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1924 and 1929, Amery was able to press his case for an imperial tariff system, empire development and imperial unity upon an unconvinced cabinet. His achievements were limited: the creation of the Empire Marketing Board, increased aid for the African colonies, the formation of a colonial economic development fund.[1] But British governments did take substantial action on one of Amery's pet projects: empire settlement, described by two American observers of British unemployment policies as a 'little known but dramatic story'.[2]

Empire settlement and the state

Prior to 1922, apart from convicts, Empire settlement was a private and voluntary matter. Rider Haggard and the Royal Colonial Institute led a lobby during the war for the re-settlement of veterans in the colonies (partly because they were thought especially valuable as bloodstock). Immediately after the war, though, government departments in the 'Mother Country' were keener to restrict emigration than to encourage it, fearing a labour shortage in British agriculture and even some industries. It took three years of peace—three years of persistent housing shortages, then sharply rising unemployment—to change their views.

As in many other fields of post-war social policy, the administration of 'oversea settlement' by the state started out as an emergency, ad hoc measure. What became the Oversea Settlement Committee was established in 1918 as a temporary inter-departmental committee. It was obsessively concerned with female emigration, after initially seeking to limit grant aid to ex-servicemen, ex-servicewomen and their dependents—still alarming a Ministry of Labour fearful of labour shortages. A free-passage scheme set up temporarily was extended for a further year

in 1920, Milner reminding the Cabinet 'that all money expended on the oversea settlement of suitable settlers... relieves to that extent the housing problem here and also tends to relieve in still greater proportion the problem of unemployment'.[3]

In 1921, Amery's plans for government-supported land settlement and assisted passages were discussed with dominions governments—this time, with the support of the Board of Trade, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour, the departments most closely concerned with unemployment. At the first meeting, attended by delegates from Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Milner justified British policy in more careful terms than those used with his cabinet colleagues. Not for the first time, a British minister told dominions colleagues that a policy of expediency was determined by high principles of racial purity and imperial cohesion:

> (a) Oversea settlement is in effect the problem of distributing the white population of the Empire in the manner most conducive to the development, stability, and strength of the whole; (b) oversea settlement should not be regarded as a means of relieving abnormal unemployment, but ... can, if wisely directed and supervised, be of the greatest value in minimizing future risks of unemployment.[4]

Such high-mindedness was strictly for the dominions. In Britain, the Ministry of Health encouraged boards of guardians to export unwanted children so that British ratepayers would not have to maintain them, while the Ministry of Labour helpfully pointed out that the unemployed would claim less if some sailed for Canada and Australia. The Empire Settlement Act, rewritten by Amery from drafts that had been around since 1917, shot through parliament with scarcely any discussion.[5]

The act provided £1.5 million in the first year and up to £3 million yearly over the succeeding fourteen years to assist emigration through assisted passages, loans, and grants towards the cost of settlement. An Oversea Settlement Department was formed, sharing premises with a quasi-official Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women (formed from members of the Women's Emigration Society, the South African Colonisation Society, and the Colonial Intelligence League).

The department also worked closely with some forty voluntary societies encouraging emigration to the dominions, including the Salvation Army and YMCA.[6] Four broad categories were eligible for assisted passages: families, single men with agricultural experience, women, and juveniles. Recruitment was undertaken via labour exchanges, transport companies or appropriate voluntary bodies; the Ministry of Labour and the Colonial Office co-operated in an extraordinary attempt to persuade Britons of the attractions of domestic service on Australian farmsteads or harvest time on the Canadian prairies: radio talks, magic-lantern shows, posters in labour exchanges, a special gallery at the British Empire Exhibition in 1924–25, even films, portrayed the delights of colonial life.[7]

What the colonies wanted above all, though, was women. Mrs Harrison Bell, member of an Oversea Settlement Committee delegation to the dominions, reported that 'the really great opportunity for the women of the country is as wives of the present, and mothers of the future generations of our kinsfolk overseas'. A feminist and Labour party member, Mrs Bell favoured more women-only bodies to undertake selection, planning and aftercare for female emigrants.[8] Their future function, though, remained a domestic one: Muriel Talbot, Dame of the British Empire and member of the Oversea Settlement Committee, suggested for instance that

> The typical house in Australia, with never more than two storeys and no basement, leads to greater ease for the woman in her daily work. The climate, too, and the absence of the foggy and quite often smokebound conditions of Great Britain, leads to far less labour in keeping either house, person, or clothes neat and clean.

They should avoid Northern Australia, though, which was 'tropical, and extremely trying for white women and their families'.[9]

For obvious reasons, women were anxiously sought by the dominions governments. Demand, then, was buoyant in the dominions regardless of the labour market; supply, on the other hand, tended to rise and fall with levels of female unemployment. As unemployment rose, so female migrants were wooed: the Oversea Settlement Department by 1927 financed eight full-time agents to recruit and supply speakers for the

Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women.[10] With a 'surplus' of almost two million women over men in the United Kingdom, and a chronic shortage in the colonies (there were in 1921 some 432,000 more men than women in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa combined), domestic servants and potential housewives were particularly welcome.[11]

Men posed a more difficult problem. The difficulty was that demand in the dominions fell during recession—at precisely the moment when the supply of able males in Britain was at its peak; and of course demand was highest in the dominions once trade had recovered, when the mother country could only offer the least competitive members of its own reserve army of labour. Nor was experience a spur to increased labour export: on the contrary, migration schemes tended to show just how difficult it was, for a variety of reasons, to transfer unemployed British industrial workers to jobs as colonial farmworkers.

Dominions governments expressed an early demand after the war ended 'for men and boys willing to engage in work upon the land'.[12] Land settlement schemes were arranged with the governments of Victoria, New South Wales and, most ambitiously, Western Australia, where 75,000 Britons—preferably as families—were to live on group settlements in the intractable south-west; this scheme was a complete and very costly failure, and by 1930 less than one half of the settlers remained.[13] Yet the 1924 Labour government was, if anything, more enthusiastic than its predecessor; it placed Margaret Bondfield on the Oversea Settlement Committee, on which she continued to serve as a Labour nominee, arguing for emigration 'on a proper scientific basis'.[14] During its brief period of office, Labour negotiated an ambitious land settlement scheme with the Canadians, under which 3,000 families were to open up new farms; by 1932, over half the original settlers (who included a number of unemployed miners) had abandoned their holdings, some even returning to Britain.[15]

In the event, the empire-settlement movement failed to meet even the most modest hopes. In late 1922, the Oversea Settlement Committee hoped to rid Britain of between 500,000 and 700,000 citizens a year; in

1923, emigration totalled 199,000 (113,000 to the Empire), falling thereafter to 116,000 in 1926 and 88,000 in 1929.[16] In all, 350,000 migrants were said to have taken advantage of the assisted passages scheme, half to Australia, above one-third to Canada, and the rest to New Zealand. By 1927, when the world agricultural downturn was already under way, New Zealand started to cut immigration levels; in 1930 the Australian government limited assisted passages to boy farm labourers, domestics, and dependents or separated families; South Africa had never taken part.

From 1930 most dominions governments, facing enormous problems at home, were at best reluctant to provoke domestic conflict by setting Britain's jobless to compete with local workers. Imperial emigration was also unpopular with parts of the British labour movement. For some, opposition to emigration was an act of solidarity with Australian and Canadian trades unionists whose jobs were jeopardized by any influx of green immigrant labour.[17] For others, the issue was the right of British workers to find jobs at home, or simply the hypocrisy of the Tories and the rich. As the Clydeside socialist John Wheatley argued in 1923, because of unemployment 'the workers are told they must leave their native land. Frequently, as was remarked by one of my colleagues in the House of Commons, emigration is insolently advocated by men who speak English with difficulty.'[18] Apart from the anti-semitism, in other respects Wheatley's views found widespread approval on the Left, who saw imperial emigration as worse than useless in the face of a protracted international capitalist crisis.

Not that empire settlement died. Although government-assisted emigration was in abeyance from 1931, several voluntary organizations—for instance the Women's Society, the 1820 Memorial Settlers' Association, the Scottish Immigration Aid Society, the Anglo-Canadian Education Committee, and the Fairbridge Farm Schools Society—received grants for assisted passages and training. In 1937 the scale of grant was raised from 50 to 70 per cent of approved expenditure.[19] A short inquiry into oversea settlement, while judging that 'Migration-Mindedness' had declined since the 1920s (for which benefits and social services received

their due share of blame for encouraging immobility), concluded that much might still be done to ensure an 'adequate and homogeneous population in the oversea Dominions'.[20] Yet little was achieved. Assisted passages schemes, and all the aid for land settlement, left Amery and the imperial visionaries frustrated by the lack of progress. Even assuming that at least as many migrated under their own steam, the total was a disappointment,[21] failing to meet the expectations not only of the visionaries, but also of those who believed, less ambitiously, in the empire's potential for absorbing Britain's excess labour force in the short term and generating new levels of trade and production thereafter.

Training for Empire

Teaching the skills for oversea settlement nevertheless broke through a number of barriers, marking a new if minor stage in the development of the pedagogy of labour. Oversea training was neither a punitive measure against the feckless, nor a debt to the weak and deserving. For the first time, the state undertook to train men, women and youngsters simply because there was no demand for their labour in this country while there was a demand elsewhere; the credibility of Britain's settlement programme with dominions governments depended upon the quality of the labour being exported. Without some adaptation of men and women whose skills and experiences were those of an industrial, urban society, the dominions governments would have been even more sceptical about the nature and purpose of the operation, and less able to deliver the consent of their own increasingly autonomous electorates.

Of the problems facing a British government desperate to export its surplus citizens, the most awkward politically lay in persuading dominions governments that it was doing no such thing. Once receiving governments and employers started to complain that the migrants—exminers, textile workers, or unemployed lads and lasses—were ill-suited to the demands of farm and domestic labour at 'realistic' wage levels, so British governments started to pay attention to the quality of the recruits

they sent out. While emigration of unemployed miners and cotton workers and youths remained the priority, one possible means of resolving the difficulties was to develop programmes of training designed to induct the workforce into colonial life. As it turned out, these programmes were the direct ancestors of the work camps that developed after 1929.

The Ministry of Labour sought permission as early as 1922 to 'organise schemes for intensive preliminary training or testing without delay' for ex-servicemen about to embark for the colonies.[22] The British government agreed to meet half the costs of appropriate training, but—as befitted such an impermanent initiative—chose to act through voluntary organizations like the Salvation Army and the Church Army, both of which traditionally helped prepare youths for the colonies and had the appropriate physical resources (farm colonies) and human experience.[23] The Salvation Army's farm colony at Hadleigh, which already had experience of training slum lads for the colonies, was by 1926 receiving a 50 per cent grant from the Oversea Settlement Department to run six-week courses for lads of fourteen and over whose parents wished to send them to Canada; total throughput was 923.[24] A smaller farm colony, run by the National Union of Christian Social Service at Wallingford since the mid-1890s, had 270 places, again often paid for by Boards of Guardians; of 128 who left Wallingford in 1926, 29 emigrated.[25] Indeed, as late as 1932 the Young Men's Christian Association was still sufficiently hopeful of a recovery in dominions emigration to establish a 'British Boys for British Farms' scheme to provide places at training hostels; more significantly, the British Overseas League, the Fellowship of the British Empire Exhibition and the Miners' Welfare shared sufficient optimism to offer scholarships for the scheme.[26]

While oversea-settlement policy remained temporary and piecemeal, government was content to leave training to the voluntary societies. More direct state intervention arose when the 1924 Labour government negotiated its agreement with the Canadian dominion government, an agreement honoured by the incoming Conservative administration, to settle 3,000 families on new farms. Experience and common sense alike

suggested that ill-trained and unsuited newcomers were unlikely to make successful prairies farmers, and in 1925 the Ministry of Labour announced two of its four new training centres would offer six-month residential courses in agricultural techniques, half of whose inmates were to be 'trained specifically with a view to employment overseas'.[27] The government also had direct experience of its own, having trained servicemen for oversea settlement from 1924:[28] half Claydon's capacity of 200 was dedicated to basic training in colonial farming techniques; Weeting Park, Brandon, purchased jointly with the Forestry Commission, opened in February 1926 with a capacity of 200, 150 of whom were expected to emigrate. New training centres were opened in February 1929 at Carstairs in Scotland, again on a Forestry Commission site, and at Chiseldon, near Didcot.[29] While dominions governments were increasingly unwilling or unable to accept new immigrants, the British pipeline was still expanding. Objections in the House of Commons came mainly from those who thought that instead of opening its own centres, the ministry should have increased its support to voluntary schemes,[30] or from Labour and Liberal MPs who wanted the ministry to provide more places for women or concentrate on training for those who wished to stay in Britain.[31]

Oversea training was provided because it was politically expedient. What was important was not investment in human capital on grounds of economic efficiency but convincing the dominions that they were receiving not the 'flotsam and jetsam' of the British labour market, but steady workers and model citizens. Canadian farmers and agricultural officials visiting Brandon in 1928 were told that the Ministry provided rudimentary training, and weeded out 'those who were not likely to make good in the Dominions'. This involved simply an immersion in the pedagogy of labour:

> The first month is the testing period, and comprises log felling and splitting, clearing and stumping land, erection of fences, road-making and so forth. Then follows a month with the dairy cows, a month devoted to ploughing, care and management of horses, driving Canadian wagons, etc. Instruction in general farming methods, including the preparation of land, seeding,

> etc., rough carpentry and repairs to farm buildings and implements complete the course.[32]

Trainees could also expect to do some beet-hoeing and other odd-jobs on local farms; the ministry kept their wages, paying only the usual allowance.[33]

In the event, training did not deliver the results hoped for. As already noted, drop-out and expulsion rates were high. But there were also recruitment shortfalls: in its first six months, despite ministry claims that the course had been heavily over-subscribed, only 99 men went through Claydon, most of them fetching up in Ontario and Australia.[34] By 1927, though, the Minister of Labour was claiming that the Claydon and Brandon 'experiments' were a success. Certainly a drastic expansion had been approved: plans had been made, in association with the Australian government, for a residential domestic servant training centre for women, and capacity at the men's centres was to be doubled to 2,000.[35] By 1928, when it was said that Brandon and Claydon alone could train 2,000 a year, Amery announced further growth in oversea training capacity to 2,500 boys, 7,000 single men, 2,000 single women and 2,500 families.[36] Yet Amery's targets were never met. The Canadian government agreed, following a visit by Lord Lovat, to take 6,000 immigrants during 1929, so that both the outgoing Conservative and incoming Labour administrations allowed capacity to expand: three new tented annexes to Brandon were set up on Forestry Commission land in Norfolk, new training centres were opened at Carstairs and Chisledon, and five 'testing centres' were opened 'to test the willingness to work hard and to impart some knowledge of farm conditions'. By 1929, it was clear that the expansion was premature: 4,456 men completed courses during the year, yet demand from the colonies was low (blamed by the Ministry of Labour on a Canadian drought); farmers were complaining about men from the 'testing centres', and 588 men were deported to Britain; recruitment had fallen further, leaving large numbers of vacant places in the centres.[37] Far from being a hiccup caused by bad weather, the decline in demand accelerated as world recession in primary products gouged into the colonies' largely agrarian economies.

The Ministry of Labour found itself with twelve training centres on its hands, and no demand for places in the camps or for their graduates. But much had been learned. As the American New Dealers A. C. C. Hill and Isadora Lubin reported in 1934, 'The preparation of industrial workers, many of whom had been softened from prolonged idleness, for agricultural life in the Dominions constituted a difficult problem.'[38] The use of residential work camps in East Anglia, well away from the depressed areas and cities from which most trainees came, was crucial. Derived in part from existing practice by the Salvation Army and other voluntary bodies, the residential camp offered a far more effective environment for 'testing' and 'hardening' men who had not worked for some time than a training centre in their home towns. Claydon and Brandon contained opportunities in plenty for heavy manual work, within their own grounds and on nearby farms and Forestry Commission estates; the mixture of residential setting and a training which consisted largely of hard work, an organized routine and acceptance of discipline provided a ready-made template for the Ministry of Labour's own labour camps from 1929.

Land settlement

Like imperial settlement, land settlement within Britain similarly combined the utopian, the practical and the cynical. Visions of a new agrarian order could be found among all shades of political opinion and all social classes, inspiring a range of practical initiatives from allotment societies to alternative communities. Quite a bit of its appeal was probably negative, or more accurately alternative, with its early antagonism to urban, industrial culture helping it attract influential support in the labour movement. Yet the land settlement movement won favour both as an appealing alternative to capitalist society and a means of shoring it up. Land settlement policies were acclaimed by patriots and nationalists: in 1917, for example, a member of the Oxford University Institute for Research in Agricultural Economics endorsed systematic land reclamation and afforestation after the war as a way of absorbing surplus labour and 'maintaining a healthy and virile race'.[39] Churchill and the Lloyd

George Liberals also broadly supported the idea, but only after the establishment of the Forestry Commission in 1919 did afforestation became a serious option in mainstream unemployment strategies.[40] Given a new government department, with new responsibilities, settlement could be both relatively cost-effective and low in risk, enabling the Commission to meet objectives that were already identified as part of its programme of work. If land settlement lost some of its critical utopian edge in the process, it was nevertheless recognized that men could not be settled on Forestry Commission holdings without some prior preparation.

Training in forestry work started, like so many other unemployment initiatives, as part of the demobilization process. The Board of Agriculture for Scotland established a training centre at Birnam Woods for disabled soldiers in 1918, taken over by the Forestry Commission in 1919; in the following year a second centre was set up at Brockenhurst in the New Forest; training grants were paid by the Ministry of Labour. The disabled soldiers' forestry schools were discontinued in 1922; their total output was tiny—some thirty-six in 1921, for example.[41] The Commission continued to award veterans preference in recruitment (they were around 38 per cent of the Forestry Commission's 2,440 employees in 1927),[42] but it soon came under considerable political pressure to provide an outlet for unemployment. Its workforce was relatively small, and never likely to be large, but the seasonal nature of much forestry work opened up opportunities both for direct relief work and for forest settlements where seasonal or part-time workers might subsist on smallholdings. Neither scheme was ever sizeable, but the political importance of both was considerable.

Afforestation, as an element in the wider case of land settlement, had long been debated in the Labour movement. Leeds Fabians were urging the local corporation in 1905 to use forest work as a way of counteracting cyclical unemployment,[43] while in 1912 a Fabian Society tract on *Afforestation and Unemployment*, written by a former member of the Indian Forest Service, argued that as well as temporary counter-cyclical works, permanent forest settlement would 'help in, what is an essential part of

the organisation of the labour market, the better distribution of labour'.[44] Afforestation was also supported by articulate Conservative and, especially, Liberal politicians. Forestry Commission members were essentially political appointees, but with sufficient autonomy to adapt elements selectively and pragmatically from the more visionary schemes with which they were presented.

So far as relief works were concerned, the Forestry Commission agreed to speed up preparation and planting programmes where it could, and take on local unemployed men. The work itself would be menial: road-making, drainage, fencing, land clearance, and—if supervised—planting; it was also seasonal, with the busiest period in the winter. This work could have a limited local impact: in January 1928, for example, unemployed men from Sheffield and elsewhere were employed to help clear and plant 1,500 acres at Alport and West End Valley in the Peak District.[45] But few Forestry Commission sites were so close to urban areas, and some were about as far as they could be from where most unemployed lived. Most conventional economists and politicians, moreover, doubted the value of relief works, particularly as a longer term remedy for what was increasingly recognized as a persistent problem.

Although ready to help out on limited work relief schemes, the Forestry Commission doubted their value either for itself, the unemployed or the nation. Treasury thinking reinforced such scepticism. Forest settlement, on the other hand, though small in scale, had an appealing air of permanent independence. As the Commission argued in 1926, 'The extent to which afforestation may be economically employed in relief of temporary unemployment is strictly limited. On the other hand the policy of establishing forest workers in small permanent holdings... has much to commend it.'[46]

Forest holdings were attractive to the Commission, helping it 'to provide, under sound living conditions, a body of skilled workers whose interests are closely identified with those of the forest', but who were employed on a largely casual basis while supporting themselves and their families from arable holdings of up to ten acres and a small plot for grazing.[47]

Politically, the forest holdings scheme had a broad appeal. Some Conservatives thought that forest settlements might transform the dependent unemployed into a sturdy yeoman; but most Conservatives were pessimistic (or, as they would have seen it, realistic) about the malleability of the adult's character. The strongest supporters in the inter-war years were to be found among Lloyd George Liberals and especially the Labour party. The Labour government approved the construction of a series of forest holdings in 1924; by 1926 186 holdings had been completed and a further 174 were in progress.[48] In 1928 Labour's Margaret Bondfield argued for further afforestation as an outlet for unemployed labour, while Churchill from the Tory backbenches urged the government to give preference in allocating forest holdings to exmineworkers.[49] But forest settlements could never absorb the 'intractable million'. The Forestry Commission hopefully suggested in 1926 that it might construct 3,000 to 4,000 holdings within ten years; in 1929 it was invited to submit proposals to the inter-departmental Committee on Unemployment for 3,000 new holdings by 1939. Even this limited programme was cut short in 1931. Afforestation was not even mentioned in a 1930 interview in *Labour Magazine* with Dr Christopher Addison, Minister for Agriculture.[50] As part of its economy measures, the National government allowed the Commission to build new holdings only when they were unable otherwise to recruit suitable labour; by 1934 there were a mere 1,233 holdings, with thirty new ones built yearly.[51] Afforestation was never seriously contemplated as a large-scale solution, but after 1932 it made no contribution, even on the fringes, to public unemployment policies.

Land settlement, on the other hand, was persistently canvassed as a means of exporting unemployed men and their families from the industrial areas to agricultural ones. Many, including influential Liberal and Labour politicians, saw land settlement as the strongest plank in a grand, all-encompassing strategy of social and economic renewal. Since the 1880s, socialists had focussed their attention on increasing competition in the labour market as a primary cause of poverty; land colonization was favoured not only as an attack on the aristocracy and as removing labour

from the urban market, thus weakening the power and authority of the capitalists, but also as a prefigurative nucleus of the future social order.[52] The idea found favour among members of the Social Democratic Federation, Independent Labour party, and Fabians; little wonder that it provided a powerful undercurrent to Labour party thinking after 1906.

Ex-servicemen again proved a testing-ground. Following the appointment of a committee on Settlement or Employment on the Land of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers, some 16,000 men and their families were settled on smallholdings immediately after the war, at a cost of some £12.5 million.[53] The scheme was judged a costly failure, and there was no haste to repeat it. Within both Liberal and Labour parties, though, substantial bodies of opinion favoured 'home colonization'. Lloyd George formally launched the Liberals' Land Campaign in 1925 with a rally in Devon, claiming that 'The best exchange for the workless is an exchange of the green doors of the Labour bureau for the green fields of Britain.'[54] Lansbury, one of the strongest supporters of land settlement in the Labour party, claimed in 1928 that

> You have either to colonise this country or develop the Colonies abroad. I have no objection to men being trained in your training centres, and, if they choose, going abroad. But there will be large numbers of them who do not want to go abroad, and, while there is any land in this country available for them, they ought to be able to colonise England first.[55]

Little happened until Addison replaced Noel Buxton at the Ministry of Agriculture in June 1930. Addison's first priority was, he claimed, 'access to the land' for the British people, including of course the unemployed.[56] Addison's Land Utilisation Act, passed in 1931 with Liberal support, enabled the ministry to provide allotments and smallholdings for the unemployed—a measure which, understandably, had little impact in view of the political debacle of 1931, but which did possess longer-term significance.[57] Lloyd George's proposals in 1930 to settle 100,000 families on smallholdings were even more ambitious, their achievement of course even more improbable.

Land settlement proposals re-emerged from 1934 as part of the broad regional policy debate fostered by Special Areas legislation. The Land

Settlement Association was established in 1934, with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Carnegie Trust to help settle unemployed industrial workers on the land, while the Unemployment Assistance Board allowed unemployed Wigan miners on a voluntary group settlement at Upholland, founded by Peter Scott, to draw benefit while working full time on their land;[58] by 1937 the UAB was giving a small training grant to the Upholland smallholders, as to the group-holdings schemes of the Land Settlement Association.[59] On the Land Settlement Association's estates, where an average of fifty families were expected to settle, selected trainees (all long-term unemployed from the Special Areas) lived in hostels or the estate farmhouse for their induction period; unemployment allowances continued to be paid until the family was selling sufficient produce to become independent.[60]

The land-settlement movement attracted widespread interest. Peter Scott received a grant of £30,000 from Lord Nuffield of Morris Motors, to support settlements at Upholland and Boreton Place, Monmouthshire.[61] The Grith Fyrd settlements in Hampshire and Derbyshire succeeded in winning limited support, or at least tolerance, from somewhat suspicious government departments.[62] The professor of logic at University College, Cardiff published an elaborate plan for self-subsistence among the unemployed, involving a special currency;[63] in Birmingham supporters of the Distributist League called for the capitalization of unemployment benefit, so that jobless men and their families could be granted 25-acre holdings with 'a life of independence and hard work on the peasant standard'.[64]

Most schemes enjoyed as little success as those of the immediate post-war years. By 1938 Upholland and a similar scheme in Monmouthshire had been abandoned, while one-third of the 1,500 families transferred to Land Settlement Association holdings had given up.[65] Taking stock in 1938, a disenchanted Addison felt

> It would be a good thing if some of those who advised Mr. Lloyd George that this was a short cut to remedy unemployment would make themselves acquainted at first hand with the realities.... A large proportion of the men

> when they arrived on the estates displayed, through the sufferings of long-continued unemployment, a very depressed standard of physical and mental vigour.[66]

Though Addison still believed that forestry and agriculture might help combat unemployment, he now saw settlement as marginal, requiring the strictest controls. As war approached, only in the Liberal party was there any continuing view of agriculture as 'indispensable if we are really going to solve our unemployment problem'.[67]

The consequences of labour export

At best, you could only send so many unemployed off to the forests, to smallholdings, or to the Empire. Neither the colonies nor British agriculture were in such good shape that, particularly from 1930, they could absorb large numbers of unemployed men and women. Nor was there any evidence of a massive unmet demand among the unemployed to move overseas or even into farming or forestry. The total numbers actually involved in movement were unimpressive, falling far short of the extravagant claims made for either solution by their energetic advocates. Much was learned and applied from the imperial and land-settlement movements in the later training of the unemployed; what was abandoned was anything which might smack of the visionary and impractical. Later training programmes were geared with an increasingly narrow focus towards the problems, as perceived, of reconditioning the unemployed individual so that he or she was again ready for work. Any wider concern for reconstruction, of the kind so common immediately after the war and occasionally re-surfacing among voluntary movements, met at best with suspicion and at worst with outright rejection.

Land settlement programmes had an attraction that often proved superficial. Even with training, subsistence agriculture could be sustained only at the cost of an enormous sacrifice in living standards or an equally enormous public subsidy to the settlers. More substantial investments in the human resource, combined with a ruthless redistribution of

the richest agricultural soil, might have done the trick; but the political risks of that strategy were so high that it would have been unthinkable for the Conservatives and at best destabilizing for the political coalition that was and is the Labour party. Modern Green movements could do a lot worse than consider the implications of these inter-war experiences—German as well as British and Imperial—for their own political programmes!

Both the imperial and land settlement movements were, though, to have a number of significant consequences for inter-war labour-market policy. First, by legitimating the belief that work was available elsewhere for those ready, able and willing to take it, both oversea migration and land settlement encouraged policy makers and others in their belief that government should support measures which increased the mobility of labour power. Both schemes were thus direct precursors of the labour-transference policies which emerged on a wider and more visible scale after 1928. Second, repeated failure was ascribed to a mixture of utopianism among the ideologues who founded schemes and the failings of the migrants, drawing attention to the need for practical training, particularly residential training which enabled the training authorities to break existing ties—and above all cultural ones—to home and community and restructure individual patterns of behaviour. In the event, training did not resolve the continued difficulties with migration; but these could readily be explained with reference to wider economic causes. Meantime, the training schemes confirmed the lesson already learnt from ex-servicemen—adults could learn new skills, even where their cognitive powers and attitudinal disposition had been damaged by 'protracted idleness'.

That this conclusion could be drawn from these diverse and somewhat shallow experiences of training, though, was unplanned and unintended. The training implications of land and imperial settlement were identified and taken up on an essentially ad hoc basis in the series of expediencies that government turned to in the years immediately following the First World War. Policy and practice developed incrementally in each case, particularly in periods where budgetary constraints inhibited significant

policy innovation. Development was accordingly piecemeal; with remarkably little fuss and bother a range of existing training schemes were absorbed in the years after 1928 into what became the work-camp scheme. This was directly true of the oversea training centres: the Ministry of Labour approved a set of 'Notes on Proposed Alternative Uses of Overseas Training Centres' in 1930,[68] which led directly to the absorption of Brandon and Claydon into its instructional centres programme. The Forestry Commission, already providing work for the trainees at Claydon and Brandon, continued to be deeply involved with the instructional centres; by 1934 there were twenty-eight centres on or by Commission lands.[69] Each innovation was small-scale and derived from existing practice, so that each new step was merely an addition to an existing path, to be sold to Treasury and public as 'experimental'. In general, then, the emergence of a work-camp scheme gives every impression of continuity and development rather than innovation and change; what was happening was a familiar British pattern, innovation by stealth.

5

Transference Policy and the Work Camps

Land settlement, imperial migration and training for women and youths were all designed to solve short-term problems of the 1920s. As the decade wore on, though, it became apparent to all — especially after 1926, when coal's spectacular collapse could no longer be disguised — that unemployment levels were unpleasantly and persistently high. By the end of the decade, government had developed a number of 'experimental' initiatives designed to tackle the problem of the 'intractable million'. Each dealt separately with specific segments of the unemployed labour force — juveniles, women, ex-servicemen, or intending semi-skilled industrial, land or forestry workers and immigrants — who, for one reason or another, were by the late 1920s regarded as peripheral to the 'hard core' of the long-term unemployed. What developed out of these initiatives, however, was a training and transference programme for the long-term adult male unemployed. Training, defined for this group as organized exposure to hard labour, was regarded as crucial in 'hardening' and 'reconditioning' soft human capital.

The first Transfer Instructional Centre opened at Blackpool on 2 May 1929. The trainees were brought in from the distressed areas, living in lodgings in town and travelling daily to their work. By the end of the year, four further TICs had opened, two (Poole and Carshalton) on a non-residential and two (Fermyn Woods and Presteign) on a residential basis. Over the next decade, the number of centres grew steadily, reaching a peak of thirty-five in 1938, thirty of which were residential: from a low of 1,100 places in 1931, capacity rose almost uninterruptedly to peak at 6,185 in 1938. Between 1929 and 1938, the camps also underwent a number of functional changes. At first part of the wider policy of labour transference which followed the recommendations of the Industrial Transference Board in 1928, from June 1932 the camps assumed a new

status, as a part of a strategy for handling long-term unemployment over the nation as a whole. While never typical of the experience of the average unemployed person—for a start, they were solely for men, and mainly recruited the younger long-term unemployed—they were far from being a fringe activity.

Industrial transference: 200,000 men

The Clydeside socialist Manny Shinwell, always fond of claiming credit for an invention, told the House of Commons in 1928 that labour transference was nothing new; he had brought proposals before the Mines Department in 1924.[1] And it is true that at least by 1927 the Ministry of Labour was concerned with helping labour move from the mining districts to areas with labour shortages. Unemployment, the ministry stated, 'though formidable, is not insoluble.... Industry is a living organism which is constantly in process of adapting itself to changing circumstances.' Through the employment exchanges, the ministry proposed that 'unorganised and individual' movement should be 'supplemented, and wasted effort reduced, by a coordinated system'.[2] While the government was unwilling to create any new machinery to facilitate transference, it was concerned that relevant departments should co-operate with one another. The Cabinet agreed in 1928 to appoint an Industrial Transference Board, consisting of Sir Warren Fisher (chair), Sir John Cadman, and Sir David Shackleton. The board, which was given no executive powers, was asked to study the concentration of unemployment in particular parts of the country, and explore means of helping labour mobility by improved inter-departmental co-ordination.

The board's report has been described as 'symptomatic of the thinking of the 1920s which assumed labour was more mobile than capital'.[3] Certainly it reflected orthodoxy: job creation projects in the distressed areas were rejected out of hand:

> nothing should be done which might tend to anchor men to their home district by holding out an illusory prospect of employment.... Grants of

> assistance such as those made by the Unemployment Grants Committee, which help to finance works carried out by the Local Authority in depressed areas, for the temporary employment of men in those areas, are a negation of the policy which ought in our opinion to be pursued.[4]

The board estimated that there was, in the mining areas of South Wales, the North-East, Lancashire and Scotland, a labour surplus of around 200,000; in place of relief works, it urged accelerated migration through the employment exchanges' placement services, increased training for employment at home and in the colonies, and limited financial support to transferees. Such a policy, the board believed, might lead to the transfer of around 200,000 men—precisely the same number as those it believed to be unwanted in the distressed areas.

Accepting the board's recommendations in July 1928, Baldwin announced that his government's first priority was 'to break up concentrated unemployment by the absorption of as many as possible in areas that are prosperous'. This would, he said, involve 'substantial expansion' in preliminary training to enable unemployed mineworkers to adapt to other occupations, based upon existing experience.[5] In fact, this was already under way: announcing a number of small-scale training initiatives in February, Chamberlain had said that

> it is perfectly clear that, if we are to be successful in getting the miners, who will no longer have an opportunity of occupation as miners, to move from the places where they are to some other parts where there may be work for them, we have got to try to help them to adapt themselves to fresh trades. This is a matter to which we are giving very careful attention, and in which we are taking steps which we hope will be highly successful.[6]

By summer, the case for training seemed even more urgent. The Industrial Transference Board's report revealed that long-term unemployment posed more intractable problems than the government had previously supposed; by December 1928, the Ministry of Labour had identified a major cause of friction in the labour market which, it believed, had to be tackled before industrial transference could become a reality.

1929–32: the Transfer Instructional Centres

In 1929 the Ministry of Labour reported that its

> experience in transferring men from depressed areas to work in other parts of the country has shown that, in those areas, prolonged unemployment has robbed many men of the physical fitness and of the attitude of mind which would enable them to undertake heavy work under ordinary industrial conditions without having some opportunity, in circumstances under which their progress could be carefully watched, of accustoming themselves once more to regular hours and steady work. To give these men the opportunity which they needed, the Department decided in May to open a series of centres of a new type—called Transfer Instructional Centres. The scheme was directed primarily to men in the depressed areas who had a record of employment so poor as to make direct transfer to employment in some other part of the country impossible without risk of failure, and who were either unsuitable for, or not prepared to accept, the longer course of training in a Government Training Centre.[7]

Introduced on a provisional and experimental basis — yet again — the centres were to remain a feature of labour-market training policy for the next decade.

Rather less gentle language had been used by the ministry in internal memoranda. The TICs were initially proposed by a Ministry of Labour committee in December 1928, under the less appealing title of 'Reconditioning' Centres. The committee had identified a

> class of men..., especially those among the younger men who, through prolonged unemployment, have become so 'soft' and temporarily demoralised that it would not be practicable to introduce more than a very small number of them into one of the ordinary training centres without danger to the morale of the centre.... Nor could they be sent to a labouring job in other areas, for it is essential to the success of the transference policy that only the [here the word 'best' was deleted] material should be sent forward... which will be acceptable to the employer.[8]

In a prior letter warning the Treasury of what the Ministry of Labour had in mind, a civil servant thought it 'obvious... that the class of men of whom I am speaking cannot be considered by our local officers for

transfer until they are hardened'.[9] Indeed, such language enjoyed a wider currency, for in parliament and elsewhere the terms 'reconditioning centres' and 'hardening centres' continued to be used from time to time until 1939.

The first five TICs opened in 1928, offering courses of between eight and twelve weeks, with a total capacity of 1,200 places, and some 3,518 men were admitted during the year. At Blackpool, the men levelled and prepared the site of the municipal aerodrome, while at Poole and Carshalton they excavated and levelled recreation grounds; in the two hutted camps, the men worked for the Forestry Commission. An earlier proposal to include 'short periods of intensive work at Centres which engage in market gardening'[10] was abandoned before any camps opened.

All the centres, residential or non-residential (in which case the trainees were boarded in lodgings), were placed away from the men's homes: 'The progress of re-conditioning will be quicker and more effective, if carried out away from the distressed areas, so that men live away from the depressing atmosphere of the coalfields under more favourable conditions.'[11] The numbers able to enter were limited by the stipulation that 'no more men shall be "reconditioned" than are likely to be placed at the end of their period, so that the men will have expectation of a job if they are diligent.'[12]

Recruits were drawn entirely from the depressed areas, had to be aged at least nineteen (in the first months, there was an upper age limit of thirty-five), and out of work for three months or more (reduced from an original qualifying period of six months). Transference to a job was to be facilitated, in the case of those 'reconditioned' in the residential work camps on Forestry Commission land, by transference from Presteign or Fermyn Woods after six weeks to the Carshalton Centre, where the men might establish contact with a prospective employer.[13]

Initially, attendance at the TICs was voluntary. However, with the abandonment of the 'genuinely seeking work clause' by the Labour government in 1929, Margaret Bondfield — who had opposed the change—encouraged Ministry officials to establish some alternative test of willingness to find work for recipients of benefit.[14] Bondfield told the

Cabinet in early February 1930 that, in her view, 'the stage has been reached in the process of "draining the waterlogged areas" when such men [those refusing training] should have their benefits disallowed if they refuse without good reason to take a course of instruction when it is offered them.... Their number is not large.'[15]

Bondfield was also, although not prepared to say so in public, anxious to ensure that the oversea training centres were ready to meet a hoped-for future demand for migrant worker training after the end of the Canadian scheme in summer 1930. In April 1930, the Ministry decided to reallocate five oversea centres—Claydon, West Tofts, High Lodge, Cranwich and Carstairs—for an expansion of the TIC programme.[16]

In March 1930, the Ministry started to exercise its powers of compulsion (granted in the 1911 Insurance Act, and repeated in Section 7 of the 1920 Act) by threatening to deny benefits to those who refused to enter the TICs. It was claimed that 'In all cases, recruits are limited to those who might respond to training', but the element of compulsion was transparent,[17] and unsurprisingly the ministry found in 1930 that 'the use of the power... led to a considerable increase in the number of men coming forward.'[18]

The decision to conscript was motivated at least in part by the Labour government's expansion of the TIC programme. Left with redundant oversea training centres, the Ministry of Labour turned Claydon, Carstairs, and the three Norfolk annexes into TICs,[19] providing a total of 1,880 places. Actual throughput was slightly below capacity; according to the ministry, this was the deliberate result of limiting recruitment to those who were likely to find work at the end of the course, itself a consequence of the Unemployment Grants Committee's decision to abandon its earlier requirement that public works projects should employ a specified proportion of transferees from the distressed areas in their work-force as a condition of receiving grant aid.[20] As the Ministry's principal secretary, Wilfred Eady, observed before the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, 'when things became very bad [in 1930] it became impossible to force transferred labour on areas which have increasing numbers of unemployed themselves.'[21] With the end of the UGC quota

scheme, the TICs' part in the transference process assumed a new significance.

Finding jobs for the trainees was to be harder still in 1931. Standards of recruitment were stiffened; only those who passed a rigourous medical, and were considered fit for the toughest 'heavy pick and shovel work', were accepted. And as it became apparent that the dominions' demand for migrant labour was unlikely to reappear, at least in the foreseeable future and on any scale, so it was decided to reverse the earlier expansion of the programme, which had moreover proven more costly than anticipated. Poole TIC closed when the recreation ground was completed in March, and in October it was followed by Blackpool, High Lodge and Cranwich Heath, reducing total capacity to 1,100 places—100 below the levels inherited by Bondfield in 1929; throughput, at 7,641, was over 2,000 down on the previous year.[22] Had the centres continued to exist simply to service the policy of labour transference, they would have fallen victims to the economy drive, since it was increasingly difficult to place ex-trainees even in temporary employment. As it was, the centres survived, thanks to their role as 'reconditioning' agents.

'Reconditioning' and the pedagogy of labour

'Reconditioning' was not just a convenient shorthand for training. As metaphor, it translated the unemployed human into a worn-out piece of machinery, whose value could be realized only through remedial engineering. This was to be achieved through a pedagogy of the purest forms of labour, stripped of all pretensions to a wider process of education and growth: it was to consist quite simply of a grinding submission to hard manual work, set to the routine of an organized daily and weekly timetable, and held in place by a blend of industrial and military discipline.

At the residential centres, men worked on Forestry Commission property, felling trees, planting and road-making; at the non-residential centres they excavated and levelled land. There was a limited amount of

indoors handicrafts training (rough carpentry, elementary metalwork, boot and shoe repairing), and a small amount of 'instruction... in ordinary educational subjects both for its own sake and to help to solve the problem of keeping the men occupied in wet weather', plus a few organized games; evidently the games and 'ordinary' education (arithmetic, English and handicrafts) were secondary.[23] Hill and Lubin, who visited Carshalton TIC in 1930, reported that the trainees were taught little but the most rudimentary skills of digging and carrying:

> Located a few miles from London in an area of wasteland and meadow, it is housed in several long corrugated iron shacks which contain offices, commissary, mess hall, tool and equipment rooms, and facilities for central carpentry and metal work... in 1930, the principal activity was levelling a huge field. All work was done with hand shovels and wheelbarrows with the exception that, in certain sections of the field, rails had been laid on which hand-propelled track cars were used. On rainy days the men were given instruction in wood-working, metal work, and rough boot and shoe repair. Armchairs, benches, and the like were turned out, each the product of a score or so men. Such work was done to keep the men occupied and to give them some tool sense, not to make them masters of crafts. In addition, when required, instruction was given in reading and writing. In control of these activities was a staff of 27 persons, including a manager, an assistant manager, a bookkeeper, and 20 out-of-door instructors and supervisors.[24]

Similar types of work, with much the same routines, were followed elsewhere.

In order to legitimate the process of 'reconditioning', the TIC regime had to approximate in some respects at least to the relationships which prevailed in the external world of 'free labour'. Within strict limits, reconditioning assumed the symbolic form of a reciprocal transaction, undertaken by traders in a free market. In return for their 'purchase' of training services, the trainees were charged a fee. This ate up most of their benefits, leaving them economically dependent on the TIC. The 'course fee' took up all but 4s (reduced to 3s in 1931) of the men's weekly benefit for board and lodging at the residential centres; in the non-residential centres, they were given an allowance on top of benefit which was

designed to leave around 5s 'for incidental expenses, after paying for board and lodgings' (reduced to 4s in 1931). Dependants at home, if any, received 9s weekly over their normal benefit level, to compensate for the loss of the man's contributions.[25] On completing the course, trainees were issued a free travel warrant either to their homes, or to a new place of employment.

Legitimacy, though, was persistently undermined at a practical level by the labour exchanges' inability to find jobs for the TICs' 'graduates'. Up to 1930, the ministry had overcome the problems it faced in the real 'free market for labour' by finding temporary work funded by the Unemployment Grants Committee under what became known as 'the Whipsnade scheme'; this involved placement with an employer—often on a UGC project — towards the end of the course, after which the employer agreed to take on the trainees for three months, receiving a subsidy from the ministry towards the wage costs. According to Hill and Lubin, trainees also received lower than standard wages, in recognition of the fact that—despite the 'hardening' in the TIC—they were not yet capable of working to the standards of labour recruited on the open market.[26] Such employment was almost always temporary: work on Whipsnade Zoo continued to June 1932, but the construction of playing fields for London University and the extension of the Piccadilly Line to Northfields ended in 1931.[27] The Whipsnade scheme, little more than an exercise in public relations (and wage-cutting), was a short-lived component in the labour transference programme. The issue of placement after a course continued to hang over the TICs, undermining their legitimacy in the eyes of trainees and the working-class community more broadly; but as transference ceased to be the sole rationale of the centres, expedients like the Whipsnade scheme were largely abandoned.

By 1932, it was a commonplace among specialists that transference was not working. Jewkes and Winterbottom, in their comprehensive survey of Cumberland and Furness in the North-West, published in 1933, concluded that 'Unemployment... in some measure is finding its natural remedy in the movement of the population. But this movement... is not rapid enough to meet the intensity of the post-war depression.... There

can be little doubt that, so far as adult males are concerned, the schemes have failed.'[28]

Hill and Lubin, describing the transference policy as an 'heroic effort', recognized that its impact had been marginal.[29] Nonetheless, both specialist commentators and government took the view that the limited impact of transference policy by 1932 did not in itself invalidate the principle: broad policy towards unemployment continued to be constituted within a labour-market framework that above all sought the removal of friction and obstacles to mobility, despite growing recognition between 1932 and 1934 that existing measures to promote transference — including training — were inadequate. With the election of the National government, less concerned than its predecessor with training only when there were potential jobs available, the programme entered a new phase.

1932–39: the Instructional Centres and the long-term unemployed

A minor sign that government policy was shifting its emphasis came in June 1932, when ministry dropped the word 'Transference' from the title of its camps. Restrictions on the areas for recruitment were relaxed in April. The Whipsnade scheme died in July, never to be revived in its original form. Compulsory attendance 'was abandoned in view of the fact that the likelihood of employment could no longer be held out to those going forward' (though benefits could still be refused to those who walked out after starting a course), and in some instructional centres the work load was lightened slightly, 'to enable men of a less robust but employable type to obtain the maximum benefit from the course'. High Lodge, Cranwich Heath, and Fermyn Woods were re-opened, and recruitment was stepped up, though the run-down had been so severe that total enrolments, at 6,600, were still below even the level of the previous year.[30]

What wrought this turnaround in the programme's fortunes? First, the return of the National government in October 1931 spelt the end of Bondfield's insistence that training could be permitted only if paid

employment was an assured outcome. Now, there was no question of the ministry finding jobs for ex-trainees, and training took on an even more generic and reparative role, with little regard for the immediate employment outcomes — indeed, the scarcity of jobs was thought to foster a healthy sense of competition and obedience. Second, the option of colonial migrant training, increasingly slim before 1931, now closed. Despite the continuing economies in public spending to which the government was committed, a slowly reviving economy allowed slightly more leeway than had seemed prudent in 1931. Finally, Neville Chamberlain's massive revision of the unemployment insurance scheme, embodied in the 1934 Act, further highlighted the situation of the long-term unemployed, bringing those who had exhausted their entitlement to benefit under a centrally-appointed Unemployment Assistance Board and restating once more the power to compel attendance at an appropriate course of training.

When it came to it, the UAB made no use of its powers of compulsion, but it certainly knew of their existence. Indeed, Judge Holman Gregory, chair of the royal commission which preceded the UAB's formation, had spoken out in favour of coercion when unemployed men rejected transference, so that 'some of the men in the depressed areas' were not 'artificially and unnecessarily anchored in a place which can give them no source of livelihood'.[31] With the creation of the UAB came a second source of recruits for the centres, in addition to men already being sent direct from the employment exchanges.

At the start of 1932, though, the centres' future remained uncertain. A proposed discussion of the TICs in February 1932 by the Cabinet's home economic policy committee was, in the event, postponed.[32] Instead, the Minister of Labour provided a memorandum to colleagues, warning them that the *Daily Worker* was accusing the government of using 'conscript labour' in the TICs.[33] By April, recruitment policy had been revised. Ministry officials now argued that

> There may be a case for 'compelling' the transitional payment applicants to enter the Centres, but it would be regrettable if it were necessary to give a preference for such men, apart from their industrial merits, in filling the

> limited number of 'prize' vacancies. On the whole, therefore, it is suggested [by the Cabinet] that no compulsion should be used at the recruiting stage at any TIC or Occupational Centre, at any rate in the early days of the experiment.[34]

Catchment areas were broadened (bringing in parts of Yorkshire, East Anglia, and Cornwall), and the Ministry embarked on a programme of recruitment through 'Full publicity and the personal canvass of suitable men'.[35]

Thus began what turned into a long-term expansion. Between 1932 and 1938, total recruitment to the instructional centres grew each year, other than a small drop in 1937; total capacity also grew, despite the 1937 cutbacks (see Table 5.1). We have an apparent paradox: as unemploy-

Table 5.1 : Transfer Instructional Centres and Instructional Centres, capacity and admissions 1929–38

Year	Centres*	Capacity*	Admissions
1929	5	1,200	3,158
1930	10	1,880	9,886
1931	6	1,100	7,651
1932	11	2,200	6,654
1933	12	3,190	10,545
1934	16	3,300	16,248
1935	30	5,110	18,474
1936	33	6,170	20,872
1937	30	5,835	20,558
1938	35	6,185	23,772

* Not including temporarily closed camps, but including from 1935 attached summer camps

Source: Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports, 1929–1938

ment fell from 1932 on, both the strength and intake at the centres continued to grow. The centres proved, then, a considerably more significant policy innovation — if still on a relatively modest scale compared with the Civilian Conservation Corps in the USA or the German Arbeitsdienst — than they might have seemed in 1929. Once more it is the incremental nature of change that is most striking: despite the change of title, and the shifting functions that this represented, the Centres continued to operate as agents of a continuing but increasingly diffuse transference policy. More significantly, they were also expected to provide a valuable social corrective to the corrosive consequences of long-term unemployment for morale and the work-ethic.

'A class with special needs'?

Fears of the 'demoralizing' effects of long-term unemployment, rampant in the late 19th century, were renewed in intensity through the 1920s. The civil servant Ronald Davison claimed that his 1929 study of *The Unemployed* had revealed 'a hard core of unemployment due to or, at least, largely associated with, the personal deficiencies of a residue of would-be wage-earners... [a class] whose special needs have been rather overlooked in recent years'. Overlying these personal deficiencies was the deteriorating 'quality of the men and women whom industry leaves stranded by the way'.[36] Arguing that unemployment was caused partly by personal defects, and that it eroded individual employability, Davison was justifying an approach to training for the long-term unemployed man that was primarily remedial, and concerned above all with maintaining, restoring or instilling general mental and physical fitness for wage labour of the most menial kind, rather than developing skills which might lead to identifiable jobs in growth sectors of the economy.

The very existence of state benefit payments was increasingly regarded as a major cause of the erosion of employability, especially among young men.[37] Fears of claimant 'abuse' of the system were endemic, constituting a major portion of the business of both the Blanesburgh inquiry between 1925 and 1927 and then of the 1932 Royal

Commission on Unemployment Insurance; though neither investigation uncovered evidence of widespread abuse, the existence of the scrounger remained an article of faith.[38] There were in Barnsley, the local Public Assistance Committee heard in 1936, men who 'had never worked and had no intention of working';[39] there were thousands like that in the nightmares of middle-class England, and sometimes of working-class England too.

Such concerns dominated public discussions of training policy, above all in its residential forms. Defending the establishment of the TICs in the House of Commons, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour argued that 'one of the most painful features of unemployment is the demoralisation among young persons who are out of work, and have never had any.'[40] The Cabinet Unemployment Committee heard in 1932 that among the unemployed, 'and particularly the young', there was a serious risk that the work-ethic would be entirely snuffed out: 'Mere idleness and a lack of interest in life, so long continued, is seriously affecting their character and their physical ability to do a day's work is declining. There is here a real danger to national stability.'[41] Fears of demoralization and decay, physical and mental, pervaded all policy discussion of the long-term unemployed.

Such views were common, and not only on the political Right. Even sympathetic observers of the unemployed (including some who were delighted to threaten 'national stability') believed that demoralization had occurred. A survey of young unemployed adults in South Wales, prepared in 1937 for the regional Council of Social Service and Carnegie Trust, repeated conventional distinctions between newly-jobless and long-term unemployed:

> For some members of the sample, unemployment was a new and strange feature in their lives. These were still found to be anxious and alert. They expressed their youthful impatience with the slow moving queues and hurriedly left the Exchange after signing the necessary forms. Others in the sample, however, had acquired the art of patience. They had a longer experience of unemployment. With drooping shoulders and slouching feet they moved like a defeated and dispirited army. They gave their numbers,

> signed their names on forms whose colour they knew so well, and shuffled out of the Exchange.[42]

Wal Hannington, no supporter of the work camps, blamed demoralization (which left its victims 'deprived of courage and self-reliance') on 'the charity approach'; he had no doubt that apathy and inertia existed among the long-term unemployed,[43] though his remedy—organization and struggle—stood in direct contrast to the individualist and remedial approach of the authorities.

Indeed, even the word 'remedial' may imply more coherence and strategic planning than is appropriate. In reply to complaints from the Forestry Commission that some of the work undertaken by trainees was 'futile and wasteful', a Ministry of Labour official wrote that

> I have always understood the Ministry's policy hitherto to have been that in the case of Instructional Centres we have limited our responsibility to supplying unskilled labour.... That, in fact, the Ministry's reason for conducting Instructional Centres is to recondition human material, and that the operations themselves, so far as we are concerned, are secondary as a mere means to an end, over which our technical supervision goes no further than to ensure that the means themselves are satisfactory for our own purpose.[44]

If unusually aloof and offhand in the way it was expressed, the view that the camps' fundamental mission was 'to recondition human material' for unskilled manual labour represented the prevailing definition. *The Times*, welcoming the opening of Blackpool TIC in 1929, contrasted it with the government training centres, whose function was to 'equip... for a new occupation'; the TIC 'will have the more limited aim of toughening the fibre of men who have got out of the way of work'.[45]

As a functional instrument, despite its residential nature, the work camp was nonetheless flexible. It was uncoupled from the strict transference policy in which it originated, and adapted to new situation that was heralded by the 1934 Special Areas Act, marking a shift to the dual policy of simultaneously moving labour out of the depressed regions and capital into them. Regardless of the wider strategy—of whether employment was to recover by transferring men to jobs or jobs to men, or indeed by

absorption of the local unemployed from the labour markets into the relatively prosperous areas—low-grade 'human material' would need to be reconditioned, its 'fibre' toughened, before it could enter even the most unskilled and menial of occupations. The work camps continued to grow in overall numbers and in capacity up till 1938; the ministry only got round to issuing emergency closure instructions in August 1939.[46] The identification of this mission — the reconditioning of demoralized human material for re-entry to the most humble levels of the labour market — carried the instructional centres through to the last month of peace.

6

Inside the Camps: recruitment, government, 'free time' and placement

How far can the instructional centres be regarded as enclosed institutions? Certainly they were a world apart, and a strange one at that. There were no women, children, or older adults; nor were there pubs, picture palaces, bus stops, or shops. Life was, literally, quiet: a few birds and humans with shovels could hardly be compared to the constant clamour of street life in a mining village or shipyard suburb. Set in the remoter parts of the nation, isolated from everyday life at home, the centres provided practical therapy, in a residential setting, for around 140,000 men, all relatively young, out of work for considerably longer than the average, and drawn overwhelmingly from the older manufacturing regions. The experience could be compared with barracks life—yet there was no conscription in Britain; or with imprisonment—yet you had broken no law.

Work camps, though, were neither prisons nor barracks. In a relatively urban society, and one where personal mobility in peacetime was limited, the very fact of being sent to a work camp was of course out of the ordinary, involving a lengthy journey, strange companions, monastic isolation from the world, communal living, and plenty of hard work. But although they were enclosed from the world outside, the centres, unlike prisons or the army, can be described as 'total institutions' only after allowing for a number of important qualifications.[1] It is not simply that the boundaries were permeable, allowing for at least some free interplay between trainees and the outside world. Remarkably little effort was made to control the trainees' lives outside of working hours; rather, within the regulatory framework of a strict timetable, the management of associational activities and informal social ties inside the camps was largely left to the trainees; continued attendance, although constrained,

was not involuntary; nor was discipline so fierce and the regime so comprehensive as in total institutions. The centres' internal regime turned on an extremely simple view of what was required. Practical therapy was provided by the camps' routine, their heirarchical structures, and 'rational' organization of time, but above all by exposure to labour. Work—ditching, hedging, levelling, quarrying, tree-felling, planting—dominated life in the camps, and it was all work that could be done and had to be done with hand, pick, or shovel; the most elaborate technology was a rough tramway, with hand-pushed trucks. Beyond that, there appears to have been considerable latitude.

Selection of recruits

> I had been working in a spinning mill in Accrington, and been out of work for six months, on the Means Test, not receiving any benefit because we'd got one person in a family of five working, and I received a card asking me to call and see the Manager at the Labour Exchange. He asked me if I'd go to a training centre. Well, I agreed to go, with three other pals of mine, we'd worked together. We had to go to Blackburn for a medical and more interviews. After some time, not long, we were given a warrant to go to Bourne.[2]

For many, the call to enter an instructional centre was sudden and arbitrary, if not always unwelcome. Selection, though, was the final outcome of a settled, rational procedure, which itself followed hard-debated principles.

Attendance at a camp was framed by regulation. First was the question of which categories might be recruited. Eligibility rules specified age, home area, fitness, and period out of work. After 1929 (up to then only young men were accepted), the centres were opened to men aged eighteen to forty-five, unemployed for three months or more, and living in a distressed mining area. In 1934 recruitment was opened up to other 'districts in which unemployment had been heavy and sustained',[3] and to unemployed men from the whole country in 1936 (with preference being given to those from the special and depressed areas).[4] All had to

pass a medical (stiffened slightly during 1931), though men were sometimes sent home from a centre for reasons of health.

Framing broad categories of entitlement was one thing; identifying individuals who ought to go was quite another. Here, where such intangibles as 'moral character' came into play, the codified rules were supplemented by formal advice and local discretion. At first, local judgements had been important in sifting the eager applicants: when Claydon and Brandon started recruiting would-be emigrants, they were overwhelmed: over 5,000 were said to have applied by February 1926; each case was considered locally by the labour exchanges, with interviews for serious applicants, who were examined again by the relevant dominions authorities before permission to emigrate could be granted. Ultimately 2,013 were deemed suitable.[5]

At this early stage, the authorities were able to pick and choose. Still, though, they ended up with rather fewer trainees than they had hoped. Subsequently, informal screening was used to identify possible candidates from the unemployed benefits register—a task that was, in many cases, not greatly appreciated by those who received the offer of a place. In 1929, the year when age limits were widened, the Ministry of Labour was already complaining that 'Many men declined to leave home on grounds which must be regarded as reasonable. Others, however, including many for whom the centres afford the only reasonable hope of re-employment, have declined to take advantage of these courses for reasons which cannot be regarded as sufficient.'[6]

By this stage the ministry had started to use its local employment committees, consisting of appointed representatives of local employer and trade union and local authority interests whose function was largely advisory, to help select individuals for training and transference (and also for oversea settlement).[7] They continued to perform this role, albeit relying heavily on the advice of Exchange officials, until the Unemployment Assistance Board assumed full responsibility for dealing with recruitment in early 1937.[8]

Each camp had its own catchment area. Brechfa and Shobdon received men from Wales and the South-West; Hamsterley took Durham men;

Yorkshire and East Anglia men went to the East Anglian camps or (for Yorkshiremen) Allerston; Scots to Carstairs, Glenbranter or Glenfinart; and so on.[9] Exchanges could send two or three 'pals' as a group (not too many, though, after the Sheffield exchange made the mistake in 1929 of sending 'a large contingent of chronic cases' who 'congealed into something like a gang and were difficult to handle').[10]

For some, the offer of a place in an instructional centre was welcome. 'Well,' said one ex-trainee when asked why he'd opted to attend Bourne Instructional Centre, 'I wasn't getting any money, I'd no prospects of any work, cotton was finished.... It was out in the country, a different district, the people were quite interesting, and I wasn't working.'[11] Others went less willingly. When compulsion was tried between 1930 and 1932, a number of men who refused to go to TICs lost their benefit; in no case did the Umpire allow an appeal, even where a claimant had instead opted for a job which later turned out to be temporary.[12] But compulsion was short-lived; with increasing sophistication, the authorities took to using the novel techniques of advertising.

Initially hesitant and sometimes perfunctory, the Ministry of Labour started to offer speakers, posters and film—tactics taken up by the Unemployment Assistance Board from the start. The UAB was also usually represented on training panels of the local employment committees, where its officers highlighted the reluctance of young unemployed men to attend a residential centre. The UAB's Preston district officer reported, for example, that 'at an early stage of the work it was seen that a good deal of prejudice against the centres existed, particularly in the industrial parts of the district, and the percentage of effective interviews was discouraging'. Further 'excuses' were reported from the mining valleys of South Wales, where

> The panels have met with relatively little success. Many of the applicants appearing before them have given no reason for not being prepared to go to a centre, but others alleged hopes of local employment in the near future; the fact that they were already perfectly fit; the loss of present advantages, such as large gardens and allotments; the distance of some of the centres from any towns; inadequacy of the allowance; the unlikelihood of getting

any job after the course, and the seriousness of the loss of their allowance to the household (though in fact adjustments in the allowances are made in these cases). Married men not unnaturally hesitate to leave their wives and children for as long as three months. Finally a certain number criticise the camps on various grounds, or allege too much discipline in them.

In Swansea men would only go in the summer months if at all, 'declaring that they can keep themselves fit at home'.[13] This, while neatly calling the UAB's bluff, was exactly what the authorities were seeking to avoid: for them, 'home' was the problem, not a solution. The persistent evidence of reluctance to attend was drawn to the board's attention by its secretary, Wilfrid Eady, an experienced Ministry of Labour civil servant who had in 1928 acted as secretary to the Industrial Transference Board. Presumably under Eady's guidance, the UAB once more raised the question of compulsory attendance.

For the board, the problem was not in acquiring new powers. The 1934 Act clearly allowed the authorities to penalize claimants who unreasonably refused to undergo an approved training course. The difficulty lay in persuading the Ministry of Labour to use its powers to the full. At first, the board contented itself with expressing the hope that steps would be taken to overcome 'apathy', but by 1936 it was manœuvring to take responsibility for recruitment away from the Ministry of Labour. It claimed that its own local officers, with intimate knowledge of individuals, could direct those who might benefit to the appropriate course; the results of a survey of those eligible to attend were cited in evidence. The UAB campaign started in earnest when a series of regional surveys showed that an overwhelming majority of eligible unemployed men did not want to go anywhere near an instructional centre. Carried out by UAB staff in 1936, the surveys found that of 54,000 eligible men in Newcastle, only 6,500 were prepared to consider any course of training; of 53,000 interviewed in Glasgow, a mere 4,700 were willing; while of 2,250 single men aged eighteen to thirty in Durham district, 800 persistently refused even to contemplate an instructional course (admittedly 770 of this prime group had already been to a camp). Two years later the UAB drew its local advisory committees into the process, asking them to examine the

Live Registers and interview each applicant for assistance, male and female, who was less than thirty years old. Most advisory committees agreed that the board should exercise its powers, under Section 40 of the 1934 Unemployment Assistance Act, to deny benefit to those who refused to attend training without good reason.[14]

In trying to create a consensus among the policy community, UAB officials sought to keep advisory committees informed of any good news about local trainees on instructional centre courses. UAB training panel members were from 1935 urged to visit the centres, to counter popular 'prejudice' against them; by 1937, when recruitment was still more difficult, selected members of some advisory committees and appeals tribunals were invited to gain first-hand knowledge of the centres.[15] Such energetic lobbying gave the UAB a reputation for influence which went beyond its formal powers, and did little to allay the fears of those, like Sam Watson of the Mineworkers' Federation, who noted that its 'happy knack of giving general directions to Parliament' gave it more power than was good for it, or for the unemployed.[16] Technically the UAB simply reported what it had discovered—namely the need for some action to counter 'apathy'—and passed on the views of its local advisory committees. However, the UAB's lobbying shaped not only opinion; it also tried to affect practice in the local labour exchange. In May 1935 the UAB asked whether, in the light of 'a deficit of candidates', benefit should only be given to those willing to train at an instructional centre; the Ministry of Labour's Training Division reported that 'Interdepartmentally we also worked out a procedure for putting a certain amount of judicious administrative pressure upon suitable young men in the depressed areas.... Unfortunately the Minister felt unable to authorise this procedure.'[17]

The minister emphatically rejected similar proposals in the following year, largely because they would have been politically suicidal.[18] Nonetheless, local offices did use 'judicious administrative pressure', sometimes amounting to coercion. Hill and Lubin thought attendance at a centre was 'semi-compulsory', and Evelyn Burns reported that the UAB was using its advisory committees to apply indirect pressure.[19] According to Wal

Hannington, leader throughout the 1930s of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 'one frequently comes across men who have gone to the camps under the impression that, if they had refused, their benefits would be stopped.'[20]

If the UAB remained its main official source, the idea of compulsion was nevertheless widely canvassed. Qualified support came from the researchers Jewkes and Winterbottom: 'If, but only if, the Government is prepared to spend large sums on an adequate transfer scheme, then irrational individual reluctance, in cases suitable for transfer, should not be allowed to stand in the way.' The point at which compulsion might enter, they believed, lay in instructional training.[21] The Commissioner for Special Areas supported compulsion, while Sir John Davison made it the main focus of his contribution to a BBC discussion of 'Young Men on the Dole':

> This modern system of needs allowances is all very well for the decent steady fellows... but, as one might expect, it turns out to be a bit too good for the weaker brethren. For them the temptation to get money for nothing is too great, and they fall into the habit of living without work. Then, when they are offered—as nearly all have been—a course of training or reconditioning in a Ministry of Labour Training Centre, they refuse.... Society cannot refuse to give any man relief if he needs it, but society must attach some disciplinary condition to the relief. In the old days he was sent to the workhouse. Today, I think he should be sent to a residential work centre such as that at Belmont in Surrey.[22]

A *Times* editorial in 1938 called for a compulsory 'Labour Service' in Britain,[23] a view intermittently echoed by Tory backbenchers through the later 1930s.[24] The National government's view, in the words of the Minister of Labour, was that 'the Centres have always been voluntary' and would remain so.[25]

Clearly it suited the British government that its unemployment training programme was non-compulsory, especially in the mid 1930s, after the Nazi seizure of power had brought compulsory labour service into disrepute. Nor was the Ministry of Labour convinced that compulsion would produce effective training results, that conscripts would be so

ready to accept discipline as volunteers, or that it was worth offering the National Unemployed Workers' Movement such an obvious rallying cry. Moreover, Treasury approval for instructional training remained provisional. By 1939 there was growing pressure from the UAB, from Tory backbenchers, and from such opinion-leaders in the field as Sir Ronald Davison for the application of compulsion to the 'loafer',[26] and we may speculate (if fruitlessly) on what the outcome might have been had the 'loafers' not donned uniforms in 1939. It was always possible anyway to maintain legitimacy by applying 'judicious administrative pressure' upon the individual while running a training scheme that was demonstrably voluntary.

The internal regime

Modern media technologies and advertising techniques were used increasingly systematically to associate the centres with what were, essentially, the values and images of leisure. Films were made—one, *On the Way to Work*, by the pioneering documentary director Edgar Anstey, consisted largely of interviews with trainees—and shown to invited audiences of young men, identified by the authorities as likely candidates for the centres. In NUWM strongholds, showings tended to be disrupted, as at Pontypool in 1935. The Ministry of Labour also distributed what it called 'Albums', expensively printed on glossy paper and at least one illustrated with—again, the Ministry's words—'actual coloured photographs'. The albums were meant for display in exchanges, community centres and public libraries, and extolled a life of 'Interesting work, carefully graded to individual capacity and condition, good wholesome food and plenty, comfortable quarters, recreation and pleasant healthy conditions'.[27] Apparently, it was not unlike a summer scout-camp, with the addition of practical support geared to each individual's needs.

That was one view; quite another came from the communists and their associated organization, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. For much of their history, the NUWM, while aware of the camps' existence, saw little point in campaigning in, or even against them. What

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changed that indifference, if briefly, was the shock of the Nazi victory in Germany, which the communists associated with the rise of a new stage in the capitalist mode of production: monopoly capitalism worked, it was thought, through mechanized and routinized assembly lines, requiring not the skilled but troublesome craftworkers of 19th-century industry but a docile and compliant army of unthinking slaves. Nor were the communists alone. We need only think of Chaplin's *Modern Times* or Huxley's *Brave New World*. Where the communists were distinctive was in associating the needs of Fordist assembly-line production with the rise of the authoritarian state, of which the Nazi regime was merely an unusually violent form. British communists suspected that their own ruling class not only sympathized with the Nazi project, but harboured similar intentions at home, temporarily masking them behind an appearance of benevolence.

Transfer instructional centres, in this context, suddenly assumed a new and alarming significance. At best their job was to produce robots for the assembly line, at worst to prepare the way for a Nazi resolution of the crisis. Walter Hannington, the NUWM's organizer and secretary, warned that the ultimate moral purpose was military, perhaps even fascist, and that the 'mental effect of such a system is likely to produce a slave psychology which, if unchecked, will lead to disastrous results.'[28] The NUWM campaign against the Unemployment Bill in 1934 made much of the 'semi-military conditions' in the centres, and as late as September 1939 Hannington was urging the labour movement to 'remember that compulsory labour camps and task work centres means a big step nearer by the National Government to fascist administration in Britain'.[29] Certainly there was more than a whiff of military discipline around the centres' reputations. But it also suited the NUWM's purpose to portray them as a form of indoctrination for conscription.

With hindsight, of course, it can be seen that the NUWM was exaggerating. Despite the selective borrowing of symbolic and organizational forms from the military, the primary function of the camps—physical and moral 'reconditioning'—required an intrinsically civil, voluntary socialization into the desired attributes of the 'free' labourer.

It is hardly surprising that some full-time centre staff came from the armed forces. As well as simple availability (compounded by the preferential recruitment policy of government departments in the 1920s), ex-servicemen also possessed experience of handling large groups of men. An ex-trainee at Pickworth summer camp recalled that 'Each row of tents had got an officer, mostly ex-army.'[30] A 1934 Ministry of Labour report on summer camps noted that two newly-appointed managers with no experience in centres nonetheless 'had considerable experience in the running of Camps, Commissariat, etc. One is an ex-Flying Officer, and the other an ex-Royal Engineer.'[31] This recruitment policy provoked the lurid comment in the *People* that: 'Civilian serjeant-majors, retired police officers, ex-NCOs of the army and officials transferred from Poor Law Institutions will be in charge and offenders against regulations will be marched before the Commandant at the orderly room every morning.'[32]

That one-time officers and NCOs were thought suitable to run the camps does not necessarily mean that they could run a camp on military lines. Rather, military experience was—as in so many industries—seen as providing a sound background in 'man management'. The personnel function in the camps was, then, overseen largely by men who had previously served in the armed forces; if they thought about training at all, it was in traditional military terms (summed up in the Education Corp's alleged advice on lesson planning, 'Tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them it, then tell them what you've just told them').

Camp management was certainly hierarchical in structure. At summer camps, for instance, the finely graded full-time staff would at least include a camp manager, a clerk/storekeeper, a chief cook and assistant cook, a medical orderly, and two grades of gangers (one ganger per twenty-five trainees). None was generously paid: a ganger's weekly wage could, in 1934, be as low as £1 19s (including an estimated 15s for board and lodgings), while a summer camp manager's wage ranged from £3 15s to just over £5 (again, including a sum for board and lodgings).[33] The hierarchy and pay scales were not greatly different at the permanent hutted camps, though their greater size and plant required further grades

of paid specialist workers interposed between the trainees and camp management. Normally, the camp manager had little direct contact with the trainees: at Pickworth, 'this big lumberjack, he was head man. He was Australian. We saw him every day, but he never bothered us much.'[34] Day-to-day contact was mediated through gangers, described by one of Hannington's informants as 'tall, ex-military men who see to it that you get your work done'.[35]

Discipline within the camps was organized mainly around managerial control over time. Time was organized around meals, sleep and work: according to a trainee writing in the NUWM paper, the *Unemployed Leader*, 'The rigmarole for the day is: rise at six; roll blanket, sweep up tent, wash, breakfast at eight o'clock, then line up for roll call, get your tools out and off to the forest till five p.m.'[36] The passing of time was marked by quasi-military ritual. Len Edmondson, like others, remembered a roll-call before the British flag each morning and evening;[37] a boiler-room orderly who worked in several hutted camps was asked to 'hoist the union jack each morning and take it down each night'.[38] When I walked across the North Yorkshire moors in 1990, the flag-staff at Gilling camp still stood as a lonely memorial to the men who lined up before it; perhaps it is still there today. Other military parallels include endless waiting in line, followed by brisk route marches to work.

Upon entering the camps, trainees faced 'welcoming ceremonies' which introduced them to the intense physical training to come. On their first day at Pickworth, a group of freshly-arrived trainees was broken in with a brisk cross-country march led by

> this public-schoolboy sort of man.... He went off at a terrific rate; some of these lads could hardly walk, suffering from malnutrition. He kept chivvying these on. I had no trouble, I liked walking and we wasn't starved.... But I'd have liked to have taken that public school lad for a walk on the hills.[39]

These quasi-military experiences continued; after breakfast, William Heard recalled, 'it was "You, you and you fall in line...."'[40] Individualism was moulded rather than crushed: trainees did not wear a military style uniform, but were issued with a pair of rough leather boots and

distinctive brown corduroy trousers. George Hopley, who broke roadways for the Forestry Commission for six weeks at Hamsterley camp, thought it was 'run as near to Army routine as they could get it'.[41] Fundamentally, though, discipline—collective and individual—depended on consent. Despite fear of poverty, a man could always walk out or refuse a duty; the worst that could happen was exclusion from the Centre, followed by loss of benefit. Wastage rates, relatively low during the hard years of 1931–35, were otherwise high; by 1938, when wastage rates reached almost one-third, the UAB was forcing men into the ICs who were reluctant to go (see Table 6.1). Sadly, official figures do not distinguish between men who walked out and those who were dismissed; taken together, though, they confirm that loss of benefit, if harsh, could not deter men from quitting or from misbehaving in ways serious enough to provoke dismissal. To put it another way, consent was necessary to run the camps; but it was weak and conditional.

Table 6.1 : Trainees dismissed or voluntarily leaving Centre before completion, 1929–38

Year	Aggregate wastage	Total terminations
1929	1,029	2,783
1930	3,487	9,802
1931	1,724	7,850
1932	736	5,349
1933	855	10,490
1934	1,280	16,087
1935	2,609	17,942
1936	3,959	21,284
1937	5,285	20,245
1938	7,571	24,215

Source: Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports, 1929–1938

Patterns of authority and control resembled those of a 'total institution', then, but were modified by the predominantly voluntary and non-penal nature of the centres' functions. The camps demonstrated a military influence firstly because so many of the permanent staff, including often the managers, had a service background; and second, because a quasi-military routine represented the most obviously available model for organizing camp time, and provided an economical framework in which some sense of work discipline might be restored. But what remains remarkable about the British work camps is the extent to which the authorities simply did not bother to organize and dominate large areas of camp life. In many other systems, work camps had both a moral and a physical purpose, which as the Royal Institute for International Affairs pointed out made them distinct from the mere provision of relief work:

> camp provision, mainly but not exclusively organised for young men, usually has moral and educational aims quite apart from the provision of work. The aim of the camp is to make the campers physically fit, to inculcate comradeship and the corporate spirit, and generally to keep young men fit for return to industry. In so far as the camps are devoted to these aims they serve to counteract the evils of city life, and to provide the sense of belonging to a corporate body, and there is no doubt that they have been important factors in maintaining the health and spirits of unemployed men and boys.[42]

Here the Royal Institute was generalizing from international experiences, embracing the Civilian Conservation Corps and what it called the British 'forestry camps' in one analytical sweep. Yet on any continuum of experience, the British camps did far less than most to shape and influence the processes which could 'inclulcate comradeship and the corporate spirit'.

'Free time' in the camps.

Outside working hours, time in the camps was largely unregulated, provided the men did not organize activities which conflicted with the

camps' fundamental purposes. The authorities provided a small amount of basic education, 'both for its own sake and to help to solve the problem of keeping the men occupied in wet weather'; physical exercises and games were arranged, but on an ad hoc basis.[43] The Sports Fellowship was asked to supply a list of helpers for Blackpool TIC, and even in the earlier years the TIC budget might run to a 'welfare officer'.[44] Even this meagre provision, though, did not survive the expenditure cuts of the early 1930s, and until 1934 the men were more or less left to their own devices outside working time. Only in the last years was 'free time' attended to, and then more through the provision of facilities than the structuring of time.

At Pickworth during one summer in the early 1930s, the camp manager organized two activities. One was a race, with packets of cigarettes for the winners; once, when it rained, the men were allowed to hold a sing-song in the marquee. Otherwise, as at home, their leisure was their own affair:

> We had some cricket.... We used to go walking round the countryside, through the woods, try to catch rabbits, some places we could go swimming.... On Saturday, we would perhaps walk to Stamford, which was ten miles away. We hadn't got any maps or anything, I don't know how we found our way about really.... Some of them played cards, sometimes they'd win, sometimes they'd lose. One chap started a book up, horseracing, but the Teesside people, they were very big gamblers, and these people tied him in knots so much with their cross doubles and all that kind of thing that he just didn't carry on with it.

There was no library, apparently, though William Dunseath speculated that 'there must have been some newspapers, because of when they backed the horses.... There was probably newspapers for the officers, something like that.'[45]

Perhaps the idea of spending public money on recreation for these men—not only unemployed, remember, but softened by idleness—was too much to stomach. Only after repeated outbreaks of trouble did the ministry start to worry about the consequences of its parsimony, appealing to the Treasury in 1934 for additional funds:

> No provision was made last year, and none is made this year, for a recreational officer (the term welfare officer is thought to be obnoxious). We cannot, however, leave 150 men after working hours to their own devices. Some organised activities are essential, if only to provide a lightning conductor to less desirable activities on the part of the men, such as poaching, etc.[46]

Other undesirable activities including fighting, which was remarkably common; and of course in 1934 the men were also attracting the attention of the NUWM. Yet little was done for the next two years. Small collections of books, dominoes and other small games, were held at the camps, especially the hutted camps, but only in 1937, under pressure from the UAB, did the Treasury permit the ministry to provide gymnastic equipment and educational activities.[47] By 1938, one of the Ministry of Labour's publicity 'albums' claimed that each centre had two 'Welfare Education Officers' and 'Two large recreation huts', one for reading and 'quieter games such as Billiards and Cards', the other for table tennis, boxing, film shows and concerts. Outdoor sports included football, swimming, cricket, hiking and physical training.[48] After eight years of relative neglect, the men's 'free time' might be almost as highly organized as their work time, but only if they chose to use the resources supplied to them. Thus if they had little privacy, they did exercise a certain amount of autonomy.

Before 1937, though, almost everything was left to the chance initiatives of the men. An NUWM investigator from Scotland found that 'education' was short-lived and patriotic, the recreational amenities perfunctory:

> The first week in the —Training Camp is spent at school. Lessons are given in the tying of knots, in mathematics, and in the benefits conferred on the nation by such men as Nelson and Wellington.... Recreation in the camp is provided by a library with only forty books, a few games, and three newspapers amongst 200 men. Men are allowed—provided they have not too many black marks—to go home at the weekend each fortnight—if they pay their own fares![49]

If it was possible to go home, this unnamed camp must have been close to a town—maybe Glasgow—but most were more isolated, and people

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stayed for weeks and even months at a time. Yet private space was unknown; men lived in common, in Nissen or timber huts in the permanent camps, or in tents in the summer camps. Tension, then, was inevitable.

William Heard, during his first stint in Shobden, remembered regular fights. Later, at Presteigne camp,

> We used to have discussions on different things, but you couldn't get all the lot that was there in the one hut. We used to have a bit of teaching about some things, but that used to end up in fighting.... There was carpentry: only talking about it, drawing on the board and things like that; we'd have nothing to do with it physically.[50]

Others remembered that 'summer nights they would go into the village for a drink'; but at Kielder, nine miles from the nearest pub, 'The men often got a bit naughty.'[51] Gilling camp was also a long hike from the pub, but here the men organized a range of evening entertainments, some extremely elaborate.

> There were, of course, a concert party made up of campers, filling the small stage of the recreation hut. One little bespectacled man had the idea of getting a job on the stage by way of joining this party. Unfortunately his efforts at chorus work were so inept as to arouse shrieks of laughter as he was pulled backward and forward at one end of the chorus line. Charlie, the female impersonator, knew his job: 'The Fleet's in Port Again', and 'It's a Sin to Tell a Lie' and others kept things going so that for one evening at least it could be forgotten that they were 'the unemployed'.[52]

On four shillings a week, often miles from anywhere, that was the best that anyone could expect. Even then the evening was not complete without the opportunity to jeer!

Given this lack of interest in managing 'free time' in the first eight years, it might be wondered why the Ministry of Labour invested resources in maintaining a specifically residential programme. Isolated physically, the camps might have been almost ideal 'total institutions', regulated for the entire waking day. Yet beyond the simple routine of rising, bed-making, eating, working and sleeping to set times, the men enjoyed a remarkable degree of freedom from interference, to an extent

that appears to border on sheer neglect. Treasury reluctance to finance the centres at all, let alone recreational or educational activities, is one explanation. But Treasury decisions reflected a wider consensus regarding the camps' main purpose, to 'recondition' the men, as adequately provided for by their mere existence as residential units where men solely had to work and abide by the routine and the rules. Beyond that simple existence, the Ministry of Labour was unable to gain any additional resourcing. Only as the Treasury relaxed in the later 1930s, under sustained questioning from the UAB, did it relent.

Placement: the problem of jobs

There was, though, considerable concern about the employment outcomes of the centres' training programmes. Partly this was due to self-interest: employment outcomes, together with drop-out rates, constituted the main performance indicators by which others would judge the Ministry of Labour's effectiveness. The range of people who might use this criterion ranged from the prime minister to the unemployed, who might refuse to attend if word once got round that it didn't help your job prospects. But even within the ministry, placement was a crucial test of efficiency; after all, employment exchanges had been in the business of placing unemployed workers since 1909, and finding work for the ministry's own trainees was practically axiomatic. It also proved extremely difficult.

The death of the 'Whipsnade scheme' and the end of the transfer quota on relief schemes created powerful difficulties for the ministry in finding work for the men. By definition, a high proportion consisted of the long-term unemployed: of forty men entering instructional centres from South Wales in around 1937, fourteen had been unemployed for over three years and twenty-two had been out for between two and three years.[53] Finding paid jobs for such men was always likely to be an uphill struggle, and the Ministry of Labour found no easy solution.

For its first three years, the programme's connection with transference ensured that no more recruits were accepted than were thought likely to

find work at the end of their course. Even so, but despite a fall in throughput in 1932, the Ministry found it difficult to place more than 53 per cent of trainees — reflecting not only the rapid growth of unemployment, but also the demise of the 'Whipsnade scheme'; and as the scheme expanded once more from 1933, the proportion who were placed in or found jobs themselves fell dramatically (see Table 6.2), reaching by 1938 a mere 9 per cent of the year's throughput.

Once 'reconditioned', most trainees passed out of the hands of the training institutions. From 1932, a handful of 'selected men' were sent from the centres to the non-residential centre at Carshalton, where

Table 6.2 : Placement rates, 1929–38

Year	Placed*/ found jobs	Transfer to GTC**	Not placed	Other	Total
1929	1,608	117	29	–	2,783
1930	6,530	188	597	–	9,802
1931	5,667	67	392	–	7,850
1932	2,815	50	1,748	–	5,349
1933	1,406	165	8,064	–	10,490
1934	2,475	127	12,205	–	16,087
1935	2,836	14	12,214	269	17,982
1936	3,324	238	13,013	750	21,284
1937	2,877	379	11,486	218	20,245
1938	2,323	505	13,607	209	24,215

* From 1935 including those transferred to 'prospective employment' and from 1936 those transferred to 'special schemes'
** GTC = Government Training Centre (i.e. non-residential)

Source: Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports, 1929–1938

placement rates reached some 60 per cent, while others were passed to other government training centres — William Heard, for instance, spent six months learning bricklaying at the Bristol GTC after his second spell in an instructional centre.[54] The numbers transferred to GTCs, peaking at 500 in 1938, were small; even after a skills course, employment was by no means certain, as Heard found out when he got a job as a bricklayer on the Oxford Boys' School site:

> Of course I wasn't any sort of a bricklayer, but I was a good worker, and the foreman came and said, 'I'm sorry, sir, I know you're not a bricklayer, and I know why you've come here. The work's too good for you.... If I had the right sort of job, I'd keep you willingly; but I haven't.' So that was the end of that job. And back to the Labour Exhange.[55]

Another trainee went 'down to the office... and asked about a job, and he said "Oh, we'll send you for an interview." Twenty people turned up for one job.'[56]

Employers, it was claimed, had little enthusiasm for the products of the centres. The MP for Wallsend claimed in 1939 that few had 'any real knowledge of the instructional centres at all',[57] while Ellen Wilkinson reported that her Jarrow constituents believed that after a course it was 'no easier to get a job than it was before, and that on construction jobs and navvying there was a prejudice against them when it was known that they had been to a government training camp'.[58] Hill and Lubin described placement as 'no easy task': employers knew that men who had been through a centre would have a poor employment record, while the existing workforce might well resent the recruitment of such dubious outsiders.[59]

The Unemployment Assistance Board had little doubt that the low rate of placement was primarily due to the failings of the unemployed. By 1937, when 91 per cent of all instructional centre trainees were drawn from the UAB's applicants, it felt that 'part of the explanation lies in the fact that at a time of prosperity the trainees tend to be drawn from a less employable stratum.'[60] The board's own research into the employment records of its applicants, though, hardly bore this out:

> comparison of the records of a certain number of men who accepted training and of men who refused indicates that work is obtained by the latter to an extent not much less than by the former. It would undoubtedly add to the attractiveness of the Centres if it could be said that each man getting through the course with any credit would be virtually sure of getting employment at the end of it.[61]

Yet in the 'word-of-mouth' labour market of the 1930s, you were as likely to find work if you stuck at home, keeping your contacts fresh, as you were by agreeing to be reconditioned. Indeed, time in a centre might damage your work prospects, whether by arousing prejudice in the labour markets or by fostering institutional dependency amongst the trainees. A number, like William Heard, ex-Ebbw Vale steelworker and coalminer, became instructional centre recidivists: Heard first went to Shobdon in Herefordshire in 1932 or 1933, then a couple of years later went to the tented summer camp at Presteigne, from which he was sent to Bristol GTC, eventually landing a job as a gardener in Headington.[62] Heard did well to find work at all: of the 24,212 men who left the centres in 1938, roughly 30 per cent quit or were discharged, and 56 per cent were left unplaced—hardly an impressive record for a programme whose aim was purportedly to raise employability among the long-term unemployed.

Once cut adrift from its strict relationship with the transference programme, however, the scheme effectively became free-standing. The centres' purpose was less to guarantee a job to the men who entered them, than to exercise a disciplinary function over men who, it was widely believed, had lost the will to work. Few resources were devoted to the programme, and little effort was put into the reconditioning process other than ensuring that the men worked hard and followed a simple but strict routine. Visibly, the state was taking action about the long-term unemployed man, in a form which could satisfy Conservative critics, without provoking outrage amonst official Labour. In this respect, then, the British work camps were remarkably dissimilar to their German counterparts. Even before the assimilation of Arbeitsdienst by the Nazi regime, a German historian has written,

> Closed camps [*geschlossene Lager*] may be interpreted as 'total institutions' for the instruction and control of the camp inmates. They were subject to tight regulation and concerned with loyalty and discipline. A far-reaching abolition of the division between work, leisure and family is characteristic.... The purpose of the organizational structure in the residential camps remained the full integration of the inmates into the institution, the constraint of the Self. Intellectual demands corresponded with arrangements to steer experiences, in order to raise the readiness for integration.[63]

The German camps, then, seem to have functioned in a way that is far closer to the model of a 'total institution'. Yet the Germans camps were inspired by the ideologies of the voluntary movements which ran them; whether of the Left or the Right in conventional political terms, in many cases they functioned as social experiments, heralds of a new way of life in which community and comradeship took precedence over individualism and self. Thus powerful moral codes came to shape and endow meaning on even the meanest and most trivial behaviour; this was precisely what made the practice of Arbeitsdienst so attractive to the Nazis, who between 1933 and 1935 absorbed the system into their new state. Such moral codes were almost entirely absent from the work camps operated by the British state. Through work, and work alone, would arise not the New Man that many German campers hoped to create, but simply Useful Man, understood less as the wonderful new than as the recreation of the reliable old.

7

Women and the Domestic Paradigm

> There is every indication that the demand especially for single women trained for household employment is practically unlimited.
>
> A. Ponsonby, Under-Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, House of Commons, 24 July 1929

Gender makes a difference. While the purpose of residential training remained as retrogressive and as subject to the pedagogy of labour as it was for men, training for unemployed women had its own institutional forms, its own administrative system, and its own characteristic modes of operation. Whereas male training was generic, even vague, training for women was narrowly centred around the claims of the home; and its status was even more marginal and insecure than that of the male-oriented programmes. Nonetheless, at the margins as it was, the training of women was significant in several respects. It certainly manifests the way in which the challenge of unemployment pushed the frontiers of state intervention on to new terrain, albeit initially with the goal of removing women from their place in the wartime labour market. It helped working women to redefine their status within the peacetime labour market, with claims upon the benefit and training system. In addition, it became the focus of a highly developed, if ultimately unsuccessful, challenge to male control over the content and outcomes of women's training.

Before the First World War, the unemployed meant men. Few women worked in occupations covered under the 1911 National Insurance Act. Women achieved considerable relative independence during the war, but reconstruction, far from representing an attempt to restructure the labour market, was dominated by attempts to restore its old balance. After the

1920 Unemployment Insurance Act—which explicitly excluded far the largest single category of women wage earners, domestic servants—the only region with an acknowledged problem of female unemployment was Lancashire, where the existence of women breadwinners was thought to hamper (male) mobility. In a total working population of some 5.5 to 6 million women, most were in clerical occupations, in the retail sector, in domestic service of one kind or another, or in textiles; though women worked in the new, expanding industries—'Fordist' consumer goods manufacture, and local government and health services—the total numbers involved were, as yet, small.[1] Most working women did not work in the 'new industries' such as vehicles, chemicals, artificial fibres, nor even in local government or health, nor the retail and business services, but in the oldest trade of all: the home.

Public training policy for women reflected this ancient bias. While policy formulation on male training took place entirely within a labour market paradigm, albeit one where moral considerations occasionally influenced or reshaped 'free market forces', the training of women, including the long-term unemployed, was completely subordinated to traditionalist perspectives on 'the sphere of women'. Those few women who, like Margaret Bondfield, both wished to widen the opportunities and were in a position to do anything about it, found themselves constrained by the dominant paradigm.

Service and education

Domestic servants were the largest occupation through most of the history of the First Industrial Nation. Yet there were rarely enough to meet demand; and the war had exacerbated existing shortages on the supply side, giving many women a taste for work outside the home. As the compilers of the 1923/24 *Women's Year Book* remarked, 'The shortage of domestic workers for private posts is too well known to require comment.'[2] It was also an object of policy debate, national and

local. Within a month of the armistice the Ministry of Reconstruction had appointed a Domestic Service Committee to examine the problem, and in April 1923 a Ministry of Labour enquiry considered the question (concluding that the use of labour-saving devices in the home would make domestic service more attractive to girls by helping to overcome growing distaste for the job among young women). At this stage, the first consequence was an expansion of domestic service training for working-class girls at elementary school.[3] Domestic subjects had of course long been the mainstay of the school curriculum for girls, endorsed in the Board of Education's 1912 *Code of Regulations*.[4] Some voluntary organizations and local education authorities went further, operating continuation classes, residential training centres and scholarships for budding servants.[5] School curricula for girls were dominated by the requirements of home work, in the inter-war years as in the decades before 1914,[6] while the technical institutes and private domestic-science training schools offered housekeepers' training for older girls and young women.[7]

Demand for domestic servants continued to grow throughout the inter-war years. Middle-class purchasing power grew steadily despite crisis and depression, cushioning demand against the effects of a falling birth rate and decreasing family size, and counteracting any productivity gains from the introduction of labour-saving devices within the household. Institutional demand also grew: hospitals, nursing homes, and university halls all needed cleaners, washers, cooks, and waitresses. The 1921 census recorded almost 1.2 million women and girls in domestic service; by 1931, there were over 1.3 millions, all but 15 per cent of them in private service.[8] Demand, in most years, outstripped supply. How could there be a shortage of servants at a time when thousands of women were on the dole? When S. P. B. Mais broadcast an 'S.O.S. Talk' about unemployed women, large numbers of middle-class women wrote to the BBC explaining that they could never take part in voluntary work to help the unemployed when their own experience was that no-one, despite all, could get or keep a domestic.[9] Such views were apparently commonplace; would-be employers and the government were mystified and

irritated beyond belief by the coexistence of significant levels of registered female unemployment with a shortage of suitable domestic servants. If older women were unlikely to be suitable for service, not least because their own families took up too much time, the younger, single unemployed were another matter.

The Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment

Immediately following the war, unemployment amongst women was regarded as temporary and marginal, and the Ministry's statutory obligations—and finance—for retraining women was discharged by a quango (as such bodies are called in more recent times). The Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment, established during the war, was a highly reputable body; its membership came from all classes and parties, its functions were loose enough to permit continued existence after 1918, and its independence was sufficient to distance its decisions from party and state. The central committee's role was an extreme case of the incrementalism which characterized inter-war training policy. Created by the wartime Coalition to provide relief to women temporarily thrown out of work by the disruption of their peacetime occupations, the committee later picked up the task of organizing training for industrial and domestic work and channeling relief to servicemen's families.[10] Its membership included three socialists and trades unionists—Mary MacArthur, Marion Phillips and Margaret Bondfield. Reappointed in 1920, the committee's wartime activities had won it public legitimacy; but equally important was that its established members—such as Bondfield—now regarded it as a significant forum for advancing the collective interests of working-class women. There were other bodies which spanned the boundaries between women's movements and the state—for example, the role of the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women in assisting the Oversea Settlement Committee—but none involved organized labour in any significant way. The Central Committee, in contrast, bridged the gap between civil society and state,

administering and implementing what effectively became national policy. In doing so, the free space for women which it seemed to offer, and which had been so attractive to its Labour members, was increasingly circumscribed.

At first, government was prepared to act through the central committee because it had experience of handling women's training and government did not. Further, as already seen, government—especially the Treasury—saw training as a short-term responsibility, arising merely from wartime distortion of the economy. On 5 January 1920, the committee received its new brief to

> consider, devise and carry out special schemes of work and training for women whose capacities or opportunities have been injuriously affected as a result of conditions arising out of the War; all schemes of industrial or vocational training to be subject to the approval of the Ministry of Labour.[11]

In March 1921 the ministry handed its existing retraining programme (providing for displaced munitions workers) over to the committee; funding was piecemeal, the Treasury granting £50,000 towards approved expenditure on the understanding that the committee would find a further £150,000 from fund-raising and the left-overs of the wartime Queen Mary's Relief Fund.

Typically ad hoc, this arrangement subsequently provided the groundwork for a more long-term project in training young women who were unemployed or looking for work. Although the wartime experiences of the committee had included industrial training and even small-scale production, government formulated policy on the assumption that significant numbers of women would be withdrawn from manufacturing and redirected towards domestic duties. In 1923, for example, when the committee's funding was still fixed-term and based on the principle of additionality (now on the slightly more generous ratio of £1 grant to each £2 raised), its programme consisted of a small number of individual scholarships for professional training, and a much larger number of Homecraft and Homemaker courses, supplemented by grants of servants' uniforms to deserving girls.[12] Apart from small-scale ventures into wider vocational fields under Labour governments, the scope of women's

training progressively narrowed during the next fifteen years.

Control over the central committee was exercised through the mechanism of grant aid. Of the two main types of course, homemaker training received no direct grant whatever from the ministry; these courses were intended to adapt unemployed skilled workers to their homes, while waiting for jobs in their old trades (in practice a quarter of the homemaker trainees made their way into domestic service on completing the course);[13] the committee strained to fund them as best they could. From 1921, the ministry reluctantly provided—under enormous pressure from the committee, the Trades Union Congress, and other bodies—a £50,000 grant towards the homecraft courses, which were open to women who agreed to enter domestic service on completion. Even this was only paid if the committee were able to find matching funds; but despite aid from the National Relief Fund and the Queen's Work for Women Fund,[14] they were unable to meet the ministry's demanding targets. In such circumstances it is not surprising to find that the ministry parted with a mere £15,000 in 1922/23 and £35,000 in the following year.[15] Financially, the central committee turned a corner when Violet Markham became chairman. Markham, an active Liberal in her native Chesterfield as in the national arena, and a member of a Midlands coal dynasty, was an indefatigable lobbyist with influential connections. By 1926, thanks to persistent arm-twisting by the committee and a brief period of enhanced support under the 1924 Labour government, central government was financing the bulk of the work: just over £79,000 out of a total budget of £81,673; although in the following year the allocation was reduced to £52,000, it was raised once more, to £60,000, in 1928.[16] As women MPs pointed out, this was still far less than was spent on the training of men, and it left the central committee in what Margaret Bondfield described in 1927 as a 'dire position'.[17]

Small though it was, the grant was available only under highly restrictive conditions. Under all but the two minority Labour governments, the Ministry of Labour accepted only one area—domestic service training—as entitled to public support. The 1924 Labour government allowed a slightly wider remit, involving a small programme of

clerical skills training and an even smaller programme of individual vocational training in a range of skills deemed appropriate to women; it also dropped the requirement on homecraft trainees to promise to enter service after their course.[18] From 1925, the brakes went on again; home training centres in textiles areas were closed, since few women textiles workers would even consider domestic service as a career. The promise to enter service was this time only sought from juveniles; labour exchanges were allowed to recruit older women freely, provided officials were satisfied that they 'are considered likely to enter domestic service'.[19] So narrow a definition of women's training was, protested Bondfield, still 'a grave mistake and a disaster'. In a context of restrained public expenditure and a deeply conservative view of labour market policy it was easy to brush such complaints to one side. Lobbying might prevent bad policy from becoming worse, but the committee's members were powerless to change the direction of policy. Their one sanction—resignation—invited even further marginalization. They had few allies in the press, or among employers, nor even in a trade union movement increasingly preoccupied, after 1926, with the wages and conditions of its predominantly male membership: rather, the entry of women into almost any waged employment outside the home was regarded as a threat to (male) job security, to be resisted informally through local collective bargaining and more formally through agreements which forced women who married to leave their jobs.[20]

From government's point of view, the central committee was a useful distancing device. It left implementation in the hands of a quasi-voluntary organisation run by women, while policy formulation remained firmly within the Ministry of Labour, granting meagre aid towards one area of training. Not that this policy was entirely irrelevant to the changing labour market: trainees might find work in a range of domestic settings, not necessarily private, as jobs opened in hospitals, universities and other public institutions.[21] Government policy was, though, grounded on a separation of the labour market into two distinct sectors: one male, to be reconstructed through intervention in training and transference, and one female.

The Home Training Centres

Women's training programmes represented a regressive ideology of the home as woman's 'natural' sphere. This made them something more than a mere appendage of the male training programme, since their role was not a simple one of trying to 'recondition' soft human capital, but rather to inculcate occupationally-specific skills, and construct a new identity as (domestic) worker. Women's training accordingly involved, at least in principle, a somewhat more sophisticated pedagogy of labour than the instructional scheme, and possibly than the handyman provision of the government training centres too. Unlike the TICs, the women's centres employed mainly instructors, whose role was to train the women rather than supervise their labour. Like the men's centres, though, they had emerged in an unplanned manner. Up to 1927 the Ministry of Labour's annual report listed the women's programme under the heading of 'Temporary Functions Arising Out of the War'.

Although both courses were domestic in nature, the division between homecraft and homemaker represented a belief that unemployed women fell into two quite different categories. Homecraft courses lasted for thirteen weeks; new entrants were expected to be single, and had to guarantee that they would accept 'a place' on completing the course; trainees received a weekly allowance of £1, out of which they had to pay 3s for the materials from which they made their own uniforms; instruction was given in cookery, needlework, 'hygiene', and so forth. Homemaker courses were similar in length and content, but rather than training women for entry to domestic service were intended 'to counteract the demoralising effects of unemployment among women usually employed in women's trades' like textiles or clothing (and, in war, engineering); trainees tended to be slightly older, were often married, and were under no special obligations regarding future employment.[22]

Training was carried out in Home Training Centres, usually private houses rented by the Central Committee or a local authority. The early centres, all non-residential, were in the distressed areas, their numbers varying greatly from year to year: there were 38 when the Labour

government took power in 1924, and 57 with a capacity of 2,530 by May, with a further 25 planned; the programme was cut in 1926 (though the Ministry claimed an expansion), leaving 25 centres by 1927 with accommodation for 1,060. In 1928, an earmarked government grant of £10,000 enabled the committee to open 10 new centres in mining areas, including Abertillery, Hengoed and Pontypridd, giving 39 in all, with a yearly throughput of 2,770 women and 1,519 girls.[23]

Sudden changes in grant aid led to bitter complaints of instability and low morale. Bondfield said in 1927 that training staff were normally hired for between five and six months.[24] In response, the ministry claimed that centre superintendents were sufficiently long-term to be able to keep a benevolent eye on ex-trainees. In 1929 it was decided, on an 'experimental' basis, to keep the Liverpool centre open continuously instead of closing it as each course finished; the sense of continuity was regarded as such a boost to morale that, despite the cost, it was possible to repeat the 'experiment'. It was also agreed during the course of 1927 to open an 'experimental residential centre for training about 40 women at a time for domestic service for Australia'. The centre, offering the usual homecraft curriculum with 'a definitely Australian bias', was opened in a disused workers' hostel at Market Harborough in September 1927, taking in women of good health and character who were single or widowed, childless, and willing to emigrate on completion; costs were met by the Australian government, desperate to find servants and housewives for its farmers.[25]

Practically every step in training women was 'experimental' and 'temporary'. Within twelve months, the Market Harborough 'experiment' was deemed a success, and it was decided to persuade trainees to spend two or three nights at other centres with live-in staff.[26] In 1929 it was agreed to open further residential centres, near to likely placing areas, for non-emigrant trainees: the first was opened in Newbold Beeches, an empty house in Leamington Spa, in January 1930, with a capacity of 40; a second opened at Warrington, in Cheshire, in 1931; by 1934 there were said to be 7 residential and around 30 non-residential centres.[27] Residence was quickly found a useful learning device, for it

allowed the authorities to simulate more realistically the working conditions of domestic servants. After Newbold Beeches had been open a mere twelve months, the ministry accepted that despite early difficulties

> Experience has proved that the residential form of training has considerable advantages. The trainees can obtain more practice in the routine work of a house than is possible in a non-residential institution, and, moreover, they become accustomed to living away from home and learn to accommodate themselves to new conditions.[28]

There were other 'experiments', in the form of older women's day centres in Sheffield and Burnley, aimed at women of thirty-five to forty-five who had been unemployed for some time and who were given basic home training for up to twenty weeks.[29]

Explicitly residential versions of home training had emerged in similar fashion to the transfer instructional centres. In both cases, Empire settlement provided the stimulus which prompted the Ministry of Labour to establish enclosed institutions: by 1930 there were residential women's hostels for oversea training in London, Newcastle, Cardiff and Lenzie as well as that at Market Harborough, and others were being opened for home domestic service training.[30] Although attendance remained voluntary (the power to compel existed in law, but was never used for women), the residential courses remained an important part of the overall programme. Indeed, as a portion of the whole, residential training was more significant than for men, accounting for around one-quarter of all women undergoing courses run by the committee at any given time after 1931 (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2, pages 110 and 111).

Poverty was the committee's great recruiting sergeant. It may not, though, always have been the direct cause of enrolment: young women had even more cause than young men to avoid the working-class household, or living with their parents for too long. Whether service represented a jump out of the pan into the fire, though, was a fine point. Popular dislike of domestic service posed something of a challenge to the committee's ill-paid and fluctuating staff:

> While it has to be recognised that few of the applicants have much desire for domestic work for its own sake when they enter the Centre, it has been

found increasingly possible to arouse during a course a real interest in the work and a real determination to make good.[31]

As Tables 7.1 and 7.2 make clear recruitment became increasingly difficult; more and more of the recruits tended to be girls rather than women; juveniles outnumbered older women from 1932 (1934 in the case of residential centres), and after 1934 were around two-thirds of the trainees.

Over time, then, the women's centres attracted an ever younger clientele. To some extent, the central committee and ministry seem to

Table 7.1 : The Home Training Centres, 1925–38

Year	Numbers ending courses	Adults as % of whole**
1925	6,161	–
1926	4,963	–
1927	3,081	–
1928	3,506	–
1929	3,800	62.2
1930	3,942	51.1
1931	5,640*	52.8
1932	5,135	47.3
1933	4,682	45.1
1934	4,078	33.2
1935	4.050	28.5
1936	3,286	31.2
1937	3,407	26.5
1938	3,775	35.1

* There appears to be a change in the way figures were presented from 1931, possibly inflating totals by up to 100

** Separate numbers not reported before 1929

Source: Annual Reports, Ministry of Labour, 1925–1938

Table 7.2 : Residential Home Training Centres, 1930–36*

Year	No of Centres	Course completions	Adults as % of whole
1930	1	154	63.6
1931	5	941	70.2
1932	[7?]	1,685	57.6
1933	–	1,610	50.1
1934	–	1,211	32.2
1935	6	1,166	25.0
1936	–	871	21.4

* Figures incomplete, and not reported after 1936.

Source: Annual Reports, Ministry of Labour, 1930–1936

have been prepared to collude with market forces in allowing the 'juvenilization' of women's training. Younger women suited all parties: they were more likely than older women to want a servant's job, as well as to find work after training. At local level recruitment was handed back to the ministry, operating through women's sub-committees of the Local Employment Committees and later the Public Assistance Committees and UAB, publicizing courses through leaflets and talks to schools and interested organizations. Most applicants turned out, on interview, to be unsuitable for domestic service: they were married, were too old, didn't have the right attitude or character, or had family responsibilities: when in 1938 the UAB interviewed 30,700 women benefit applicants in, 3,489 were interested in domestic service training and 20,000 rejected it outright; a mere 812 were admitted, the remainder having lost interest or being rejected as unsuitable.[32] When the UAB arranged a special preparatory residential 'Reconditioning Course' in Liverpool in late 1937, of

500 women interviewed a mere 28 were said to be both willing and suitable for domestic service; only 10 were thought right for the course, half of whom failed the medical; similar responses were said in 1936 to be 'typical and not exceptional in Lancashire textile towns'.[33]

Lancashire women always were a problem. A century and a half of working in the mills had, it was often said, made them too independent and self-willed to make good servants. Certainly few of the women, for their part, had any desire to enter service. One estimate, in 1936, suggested that women accounted for about a quarter of the county's registered unemployed, but according to Stanley Warrington, the Ministry of Labour's divisional controller, 'Experience reveals that even amongst the younger single women possibilities of transfer are limited.'[34] Among older women, family ties and possibilities of short-time work in the mills made transference—at least if voluntary—effectively impossible. Nor was it easy to apply more than elementary pressures: a 1930 ruling made it clear that benefit could not be denied to women who refused domestic service unless 'an undertaking to enter domestic service has been given as a condition of receiving... training at the public expense',[35] leaving women who had undertaken homemaker courses free to turn down service as 'unsuitable'. As most women were ineligible for benefit anyway, even this limited compunction was rarely available. Just as important, though, few middle-class employers would have thought of a reluctant ex-millworker as 'suitable'. Given the realities of the domestic female labour market, the committee and ministry were unwilling to train large numbers of older women who preferred their own homes, and were less attractive to employers than were the cheaper and less obstreperous youngsters.

The pedagogy of domestic labour

Women's training programmes were directed towards a highly specific occupational goal—domestic service—where attitude and character were as important as skill. It was also a job where face-to-face contact with the employer was all-embracing. If it was to stand any chance of

working, the programme could not be simple 'reconditioning' (and it is significant that the Liverpool experiment was not repeated). Success lay in tolerating and even quietly encouraging the drift towards the recruitment of youngsters. Given this bias, and the limited numbers trained, it is little wonder that the chances of finding work were good. By any standards, placement rates tended to be high, given the insatiable demand for suitably trained women: of the 246 who passed through Portsmouth Home Training Centre between 1923 and 1926, for instance, 90 per cent found posts, and even in depressed South Shields 72 per cent of the 740 trained were found work.[36] Drop-out rates remained relatively low, despite the lack of formal sanctions against the women (see Tables 7.3 and 7.4), and their prospects for work were far better than for the men in equivalent positions, albeit for work of a menial and ill-paid kind.

High placement rates were mirrored by low wastage rates. There was indiscipline in both residential and day centres, but not to the same extent as in the men's instructional centres. The training itself, following a

Table 7.3 : Destinations of Home Training Centre Trainees, 1928

	Adults (%)	Juveniles (%)
Quitting	15	5
Placed in domestic service	74	87
Placed in/found other work	3	1
Not placed	9	8
(Total numbers)	(2,770)	(1,519)

Source: Ministry of Labour, Annual Report 1928

curriculum not greatly dissimilar from that which trainees would remember from their school-days, was crammed into an exhausting daily routine: 'Under conditions approximating as closely as possible those in typical middle class British homes, trainees are instructed in cooking, table service, laundrying, and other duties of a capable housewife or servant.'[37]

One of the conditions of a 'typical middle class British home', to be found even in non-residential centres, was strict discipline: according to the NUWM, one Lancashire woman lost benefit for 'powdering the nose' during course time.[38] Residence was integral to the pedagogy of domestic service, offering the possibility of control over all facets of behaviour during training, including the women's attitudes. Stanley Warrington, who as the ministry's divisional controller in the North-West had the difficult task of persuading cotton workers to become servants, believed that 'The mere fact of sleeping away from home is a very material factor with these girls—it is such a complete change in their habits.'[39] Friendships with men were impossible: a South Yorkshire women who became a trainee at Newbold Beeches remembered that 'We were strictly disciplined and were not "allowed out" without being chaperoned by a member of staff.'[40]

Drop-out rates seem to have been slightly higher in residential centres. In Newbold Beeches in Royal Leamington Spa, the first year saw almost 20 per cent of the women and over 13 per cent of the girls quit their courses. The ministry claimed that this was short-lived:

> We had a great deal of difficulty in filling Leamington when it first opened. I think for many months it continued only about a quarter or a half full. Then girls who had been there wrote home to say that they had been happy and quite a good number went down to the home districts from Leamington, so that now we have quite a considerable waiting list.[41]

Whatever the reason for any early difficulties, by 1931 the residential centres showed wastage rates only marginally above those of the day centres. Mainly young women and girls, the trainees offered relatively little overt resistance to the rigid discipline and demanding routine. But then these were a tiny minority of the unemployed, hand-picked for a job

Table 7.4 : Wastage and Placement Rates, 1931–35

Year	Wastage (%)		Placements (%)	
	Residential	Other	Residential	Other
1931	13.7	13.4	81.5	74.4
1932	16.7	13.7	78.0	80.6
1933	13.8	12.3	84.2	81.1
1934	13.5	13.8	84.0	80.4
1935	14.6	14.6	81.1	78.1

which most unemployed women refused to consider—and even if they had, would have been angrily turned down by the average employer.

Women and domestic labour in the inter-war years

Few girls and fewer women, particularly in the industrial areas where alternatives were traditionally available, chose freely to enter domestic service. The pay was abominable, the hours long, holidays and free time uncertain; relations with employers were unpredictable, friends were closely monitored, and there was a distinct lack of status. Working in one's own home was hard but might be tolerated if not always welcomed; working in somebody else's was quite another matter.

Service was for many women not even a last resort. Young women and girls contemplated domestic service, in the great majority of cases, with grave misgivings, and where alternatives were available they took them. Coventry Education Committee heard in 1936, for instance, that:

> Difficulty continues to be experienced in filling all notified vacancies in domestic service. It is found that the large majority of Coventry girls prefer industrial or commercial work, notwithstanding efforts by the Bureau to

> induce girls of the right type to enter domestic service. Typical reasons given by such girls for declining domestic occupations are 'I would sooner work at the same factory as my friends'; 'I want my weekends free'; 'My father is not at work and I've got to earn the best wages'. There are a few, however, who, having tried factory work revise their choice, but they are not always reliable applicants to mistresses on account of such experience.[42]

Coventry was an extreme case: with a mere seventy unemployed juveniles in March 1936,[43] its labour market was buoyant, and young women could exercise greater choice than their sisters in South Wales or Durham. But in Coventry, where girls had a choice, nobody would touch service with a barge-pole.

In the distressed areas, the range of options facing young women was more limited. The UAB investigated women claimants in 1937; even in servant-hungry Edinburgh, only 15 out of 327 interviewed could be recommended for training, while 155 refused to consider the possibility of service. Nationally, over 30,000 were interviewed in the following year, two-thirds definitely refusing to consider service.[44] In Lancashire, where the textiles industry had traditionally offered regular and skilled opportunities to working-class women, no one in her right mind wanted to become a servant. As the UAB's regional officer complained in 1938, 'The majority of unemployed women in Lancashire show a particular dislike of domestic service which they fear will not only weaken then traditional independence but also subject them to long hours of employment and low wages.'[45]

Indeed, the Lancashire women, like other industrial workers, were eligible for insured status; domestic servants were, thanks to the potent threat of a massive middle-class backlash, repeatedly excluded from unemployment insurance legislation. The best efforts of the Ministry of Labour and the Central Committee (whose travelling officer visited Lancashire branches of the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Girl Guides, Young Women's Christian Association, and so forth)[46] produced a mere trickle of suitable applicants. By contrast, the Welsh were thought to make good servants. The only training centre for male servants was in

Wales; opened in 1937, it offered a small number of places for would-be houseboys and kitchen assistants.[47] Even in Wales, though, scathing views might be heard about 'Britain's largest industry'.[48]

As in the other industrial nations, unemployed women were at the margins of political concern, and training programmes—where they existed—were dictated by ideological rather than rationally economic considerations.[49] The home training centres were managed by the Central Committee on Women's Training and Employment, but ultimate control lay effectively with the Ministry of Labour, which told the central committee how its Treasury grant could be spent. It was, in the event, spent on a relatively small-scale programme designed to remove young women from the wider labour market and transfer them to domestic service in its different forms. Violet Markham was at one with her male colleagues in wishing to see compulsion used on young men (even though it 'conjures up images of the complete system of the Gestapo'), but never seems to have contemplated similar pressure on women.[50] Their potential function as home-maker may have protected unemployed women from the compulsion that was used against many unemployed men between 1930 and 1932, and from the worst kinds of 'judicious administrative pressure' employed by the labour exchanges and UAB after compulsion ended. Compulsion, had anybody raised it, would have seemed inherently counter-productive: a conscript 'would not do' as a cook or housemaid, and this single track was where the programme led. Even a woman Minister of Labour was unable to do much to expand the range of training offered.

8

Protest and Resistance

We're dressed up so scanty in old shanty town,
With corduroy trousers, some grey and some brown,
At an unemployed camp that's lousy and damp
We're off to the forest—each morning we tramp.

The food that they give us would scarce feed a fly
Whenever we eat it we moan and we sigh.
Take a tip from a pal, stay at home with your gal,
In that shanty in old shanty town.

Parody sung by Instructional Centre trainees

Residential training offered the authorities every opportunity for social control. Yet as well as coercion, even a prison must build consent; the most powerful of state machines requires some sort of civil society, of creatively chaotic association amongst the governed.[1] Within this space arises dissent; out of dissent emerge visions of another life which in turn inspire further resistance. By bringing unemployed men together, the instructional centres also offered space for dissent. And although attempts to colonize the trainees' 'life-worlds' assumed growing importance, the porous boundaries of centre discipline were manifested in persistent disorder, as well as occasional outbreaks of protest action—sporadic and usually uncoordinated, but by no means rare.

Protest is mere behaviour. How, though, are we to interpret it? Were the trainees' simple acts of protest actually part of a wider, more complex culture of resistance—possibly even positive expressions of a consciousness of class that went beyond mere negative rejection of oppression? Were they perhaps working out their aggression against their parents, and particularly their fathers who had left them at home for five

years, and now talked incessantly about the hard times before the war? Or were they nothing more than the consequences of friction and local errors or misunderstandings, an inevitable but unimportant side-effect of the process of hardening up soft human capital? A good place to start, of course, would be with the trainees' understandings of their own behaviour and its meanings. But the evidence is largely silent on this point. From whatever source—printed, written or spoken—the voice of the trainee is filtered through the work of others. If a trainee had grievances, his words were taken down to be published in the communist press, or tape-recorded many years later by people like me. Officialdom didn't even bother to keep a record. What we are left with, then, are some highly selective records and, of course, actions.

Human behaviour, though, is never simple. Individual acts are capable of multiple meanings, and can express many, changing intentions; and so it is with the camp protests. The issues at stake seem mundane—food, for example. They were important enough to the trainees, but in themselves hardly suggest a primary concern with wider social and political issues. Yet food of course is not intrinsically unpolitical—think of the early days of the French Revolution, or of the significance of the banana in East Berlin during 1989—and in controlled communities, struggles over food do indeed offer symbolic challenges to accepted hierarchies of control and principles of distribution. Consider also the chronology: 'bread-and-butter' disputes peaked at times when the National Unemployed Workers' Movement was campaigning around the camps. Political questions were, then, not entirely absent.

Yet there was no coherently developed alternative to the dominant politics of training. There was a counter-politics, with occasional and then growing calls for a close-down of the camps. The NUWM organized inside the camps (although apparently not in the home training centres) during a 1934–35 campaign for the shut-down of the instructional training programme; that campaign was short-lived, lasting for a few months in late 1934 and early 1935, but calls for closure were revived in the later 1930s within the trade unions and Labour party. Organized labour, though, was predominantly defensive in its reactions to training

policy, working with a growth-centred paradigm rather than seeking to develop an alternative project grounded not in the supposed needs of the (capitalist) economy but in the daily lives of the unemployed as citizens and community members as well as potential workers. In so far as such an alternative existed, it was on the fringes of organized labour, in the Grith Fyrd movement, whose ideas—like those of the Woodcraft movement from which Grith Fyrd emerged—would now be called Green but then seemed merely odd.

The pattern of protest

Inside the instructional centres, resistance was endemic. At times it was institutionalized through collective action—often in organizational forms which were borrowed from the labour movement, such as petitioning, strikes and marches. Estimating the number or size of disputes in the camps is difficult, for obvious reasons: the camps' isolation meant that public information was channelled through the Ministry of Labour. Unless protest was unusually spectacular or large, or unless there were contacts between protesting trainees and the outside world, there was no reason for disputes to be recorded. All that can be said with confidence is that the number of recorded collective protest actions, though small, was far from insignificant considering the number of trainees.

It does seem that the number and scale of the collective protests follow a fairly clear periodization, peaking at times when the centres were a focus for public controversy. Even here one should be cautious, for the organizations leading much of the public agitation—mainly the NUWM—also provide the historian's records. Three waves of recorded protest took place, in 1931–32, 1934–35, and 1938–39. The first occurred during the period of compulsion, when reluctant recruits might have been expected to act over any serious grievance. There were two walk-outs at West Tofts and one at Carshalton in the spring and summer of 1931, and in the following spring grievances were aired at Shobdon.[2] After the formal ending of compulsion in summer 1932 only one dispute

is reported, until 1934 when an NUWM supporter reported a strike in an East Anglian centre, and a United Front delegation from Castleford heard of a march and demonstration elsewhere.[3]

The second wave coincided with the NUWM campaign against the Unemployment Bill. After the incidents of late 1934, protest action flared again in 1935, when forty men walked out of Glenbranter in Scotland and three strikes were organized in Brechfa; in April, seventy Welsh trainees marched from Brechfa instructional centre to join a NUWM demonstration, drawing up a petition to the Ministry of Labour before they returned; fifty-three men walked out of Glenbranter in December 1935, where a mass meeting in June 1936 was followed by rumbling discontent throughout the summer; fifteen men were dismissed for organizing a protest at Bourne in spring 1936.[4] The third, and final, phase of protest action developed in 1938 and lasted into the following year. There was unrest in 1938 at Glentress, Kielder and Redesdale, and during the winter at Glenbranter again and at Hamsterley.[5] The underlying causes are unclear, but they coincided with the general upturn in trade and with a successful attempt by the Miners' Federation to persuade the Labour party formally to oppose the camps.

Although the number of known disputes is far from negligible, unrest in the camps made little impact upon public opinion. Hill and Lubin's view was that 'Unrest among the men has not been great... difficult characters soon fall under the influence of a contented majority.'[6] This may have been true during their stay in Britain, but by the time they had returned to the United States organized protest had revived. More serious than the under-recording of institutionalized protest though, in my view, is the question of small-scale resistance: was it pervasive and endemic, or merely occasional?

Far more activity took place than came into the public eye. Most protests were ad hoc and short-lived, the camp management settling them with little difficulty. At Pickworth Woods,

> Well, we did have a strike one day, but there was no real organisation.... We didn't go to work, just sitting around, didn't go off to work. The Manager came round, said 'What's it all about?' Somebody said, 'About

> the food'. They only made the tea stronger, that's the only thing there ever came of it.[7]

Protest became public knowledge only if linked to political organizations. Since it was unlikely to be successful, camp strikers tended to learn rapidly that they were weak and isolated. Since the trainees were in the camps for limited periods, it was a simple matter to ensure that no tradition of militancy ever grew out of a dispute.

Isolation and political weakness went hand in hand. From 1934, the NUWM and some Labour MPs occasionally aired trainees' grievances in a public forum. In one or two cases the NUWM claimed to have inspired or led the action; more probably, the vast majority of protest actions were not explicitly political, but reflected immediate grievances which rarely burst beyond the camp gates. The surface issues were often immediate material factors, chiefly food; beneath that lay the sheer frustration of the men with a rather purposeless existence. If the protests themselves were rarely political, they of course took place in a broader social context in which employment was a highly politicized topic, rarely far from public debate, but such issues surfaced within the camps only briefly, during the NUWM's 1934–35 organizing drive.

The NUWM and the 'slave camps'

Founded in 1921, the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement is perhaps best known for its part in organizing the hunger marches and for the writings of its articulate and persuasive leader, Wal Hannington.[8] Training was, for the NUWM, to be understood and criticized, in terms of its leaders' macro-level, Marxist political perspective, as part of a ruling class attempt to forge a new 'slave mentality' among the working class. This analysis was a response to two factors: first, the impact of 'Fordism' with its robot-like assembly processes; and second, the rise of German Nazism. Its range of activities, though, was always rooted in local activities and branches: as well as providing the infrastructure of support and the personnel for the marches, local bodies

also organized demonstrations, held regular meetings, lobbied the authorities, and engaged in individual casework and representation. If its membership was a small minority of the unemployed, the NUWM was capable of mobilizing much larger numbers (30,000 or so in Sheffield to protest against the benefit cuts of 1935, for instance)[9] and its local casework and advocacy aided many who never paid the penny a week subscription.

By 1929, when the TICs opened, the NUWM was closely associated with the Communist party (though it was never, as some claimed, purely a communist 'front').[10] Despite the CP's powerful base in the South Wales coalfield, however, the NUWM had little to say about early transference policy in general or the TICs in particular. Although the NUWM denounced the Labour government as 'the most efficient instrument of the capitalist class for the suppression of the workers' at its sixth national conference in September 1929,[11] and allegations in the *Daily Worker* over the use of 'conscript labour' in training centres had alarmed the National government in 1932,[12] it first identified the camps as of substantive importance in 1934. The abolition of the 'not genuinely seeking work' clause had removed one of the NUWM's chief grievances; while Bondfield had effectively smuggled in a tacit replacement in the form of compulsory attendance at the TICs, the official demands of the 1930 hunger march contained no reference to the centres, demanding instead the general abolition of test and task work.[13] Nor were the centres an issue during the 1932 march.[14]

The most plausible explanation of this absence lies in the predicament of British communism before 1933. Between 1928 and 1932, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) opted—not without dissent—to pursue with some vigour the 'class against class' line of the Communist International. In summary, this meant accepting the Soviet party's theory that the industrialized nations were on the verge of collapse; all that stood between capitalist anarchy and proletarian revolution was 'social fascism'—that is, reformist socialist parties like the British Labour party.[15] For many communists, MacDonald's collapse in 1931 simply reinforced this view. If the Labour party and MacDonald's National government

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were no better than fascist, work camps were to be expected; in importance they hardly compared with threats to benefit levels, the indignity of the means test, and police efforts to suppress the NUWM and gaol its leaders.

By 1934, however, the Communist party was once more anxious to work alongside socialists and active trade unionists. In Germany, existing labour camps had been taken over by the Nazi state; in Britain, instructional centres provided a ready focus for much United Front activity. As usual, international issues—above all, defence of the Soviet Union—mingled with British concerns. After 1933, communists among the NUWM leadership were of course increasingly concerned about fascism; the Nazi seizure of power encouraged communists to look more favourably upon alliances with other labour movement organizations, and alerted Hannington to the transformation of the German labour service from a voluntary work relief scheme to a compulsory and semi-militaristic system of regimentation. As well as the NUWM, in 1934–35 there was a variety of United Front bodies, founded by the Communist party in the hope of building an anti-fascist alliance of all socialist, communist and working-class bodies.[16] Already, the NUWM was agitating against the London labour colonies and the voluntary occupational day centres set up, with government approval and support, by the National Council of Social Service; by 1934 the government had started to expand instructional training, while the NUWM's campaign against the Unemployment Assistance Bill highlighted the proposal in Section 40 to give the authorities the power to enforce attendance on training courses.

If the NUWM's main concern over the bill was its proposals to limit benefits, during the campaign it discovered that the introduction of compulsory training was arousing 'special resentment'. As Hannington recorded in *Unemployed Struggles*, the NUWM also feared a new tightening of class subordination:

> We claimed that such a system of labour meant the creation of a new slave class in this country; a class of persons who would no longer be regarded as wage-earners, but who were expected to be content though their family

> life was broken up and they were compelled to work without wages... the government would not hesitate, in fact, if it could create the right psychology amongst this mass of unemployed, to use them as an organized blackleg force, to smash any industrial struggle in which the workers were engaged.[17]

In London the movement was campaigning against the remaining labour colonies. The 1933 petition of the south-eastern area of the NUWM set down as its first demand 'the abolition of test and task work, residential centres, and in their place work at Trade Union rates', asking whether 'anyone dare to deny that such places as Belmont, Hollesley Bay, Cedars Road, etc., are not the fore-runners of similar [to the Nazi] slave camps for the British working class?'[18]

The NUWM started to campaign in earnest in winter 1933–34. A pamphlet prepared for the National Unity Congress in February alerted women to threats both to themselves (such as being 'forced to attend Training Centres either in their home towns or even in Resident Centres, miles away from home') and to their menfolk ('every working women should understand that her man may be sent into a Training Centre').[19] Hannington's vision of a new subordination was repeated in a manifesto issued to the 1934 hunger marchers, when the bill was described as seeking 'to turn the unemployed into an army of conscript labour to work without wages under slave conditions in Labour Camps—similar to those established by Hitler under the German Fascist Dictatorship'.[20]

The March Council also published an *Exposure of Belmont Slave Colony* claiming that 'Belmont is but a foretaste of the Slave Camps to be set up under the 1934 Unemployment Act.'[21] By now, the themes of the campaign were well-established. In May 1934 the NUWM gave 'slave camps' the front-page treatment in its monthly newspaper, the *Unemployed Leader*; an editorial attacked the camps as carrying out 'a Fascist regimentation of the unemployed' in 'preparation for a new war'.[22] By November, local marches had been organized in Newport, Bridgend, the Rhondda, Glasgow and Forfar,[23] and in May 1935 Hannington issued a further pamphlet, *Work for Wages—Not Slave Camps: our plan for action*. At its ninth national conference in December, the

NUWM decided to seek TUC support for a campaign 'to ensure mass refusals of the unemployed to enter the slave camps with the guaranteed support of all employed workers'.[24] The TUC replied that it would no longer answer communications from the NUWM, and the refusal campaign had to be carried on with the aid of sympathetic trades councils. The next series of local marches was organized under the slogan, 'Down With the Slave Act', and the *Unemployed Leader* continued to 'expose' conditions at the camps.[25]

By spring, the campaign had broadened to include a number of United Front organizations; it also won a certain amount of support, particularly in South Wales, from trade union and Labour party branches. An All-Wales Trade Union Conference against Part II of the bill, called by the South Wales Miners' Federation, denounced 'slave camps'; the Cambrian Collieries Combine Committee levied Federation members in the Rhondda to support fifty men who had refused to attend Brechfa Centre.[26] In March, Llanelly United Front Committee decided to campaign for the closure of Brechfa, some thirty miles away, providing transport for a group of trainees who—in full camp 'uniform'—led a protest march against the bill.[27] NUWM locals in Nottingham, Shirebrook and Cowdenbeath reported that they had dissuaded local unemployed men from volunteering for courses, while in Jarrow a branch of the Boilermakers' union asked the public assistance committee to have Hamsterley closed; in March, the Labour group on Durham County Council expelled two members who proposed that the PAC make up benefits lost by men refusing to attend a camp.[28] Parallel campaigns led by the Young Communist League's 'squad of young worker-cyclists' against Belmont and Hollesley Bay (now administered by the Labour-controlled London County Council), won support from a number of Co-operative Guilds and the Labour League of Youth (reviving, incidentally, past sectarianism: the Labour party was accused of running Belmont—which it presented as a model of municipal administration—'because slave camps are necessary for the bosses today').[29] By autumn, the campaign had lost some of its impetus, not least because section 40 of the Act was quietly shelved.

The NUWM's influence

How much impact did the NUWM really have? Certainly the Ministry of Labour and the UAB kept themselves in touch with developments in the NUWM. In 1933 the Ministry was asked by the Leeds divisional controller whether he should accept an application from one R.W. Connelly, 'an associate of a group of local communists, who are extremely hostile to the recruitment of men to the Centres, which they describe as "Slave and Concentration Camps"'. The Leeds office favoured refusal, a tactic which the ministry thought likely to foster 'awkward questions on political persecution'; yet acceptance might produce a 'troublesome' effect on other trainees. Eventually it was decided to take him, on the grounds that his communist sympathies were clear evidence that he needed reconditioning, 'being a product of his environment and a symptom of his demoralisation... the choice lies between leaving him on the street corner to make further mischief or keeping him under observation at a Centre'. To avoid possible 'repetition of the Carstairs strike' (the occurrence of which was publicly denied), it was decided to forewarn centre managers about possible subversives in advance; Connelly should go to Fermyn Woods centre, whose manager 'has an excellent influence over troublesome trainees'. This 'interesting case' was resolved when Connelly—presumably having found work—disappeared from the register.[30]

Further evidence of the NUWM's influence can be found in responses to its abstention campaign. The campaign alarmed the UAB, already shaken by the sacking of their Merthyr offices by women in February 1935,[31] as well as an earlier incident where NUWM supporters and local miners persuaded fifty Rhondda unemployed off a bus bound for an instructional centre.[32] The district UAB officer in Edinburgh also complained that 'organized opposition' was hindering recruitment to the centres.[33] Section 40 of the Act, permitting compulsion, was placed on the back-burner in 1935, and despite persistent attempts by the UAB to revive it, there it remained. Worry about the term 'slave camps' was expressed in a meeting between representatives of the UAB and the

Ministry in December 1936, when it was agreed that local officers should be strictly discouraged from bullying potential applicants; fear of a revival of the angry demonstrations of spring 1935 clearly underlay the cautious approach to implementing Section 40.[34] The NUWM's 'slave camp' campaign affected policy considerably more, perhaps, than was realized at the time.

We do not know, though, how far the 'slave camp' campaign influenced the unemployed. It found limited support among trades unionists in Durham, Scotland and South Wales; the Belmont campaign won support from Co-operators and Young Socialists in London; but there is less evidence of a ground swell of support amongst the unemployed. From the Ministry's point of view, NUWM agitation was a local obstacle to recruitment, but far less damaging than the centres' inability to improve ex-trainees' position in the labour market. The degree to which the NUWM itself forgot its earlier campaign is clear from a reader's letter to the Communist party journal in early 1937, suggesting that 'if the class-conscious unemployed worker would enter these centres and conduct a campaign for T.U. wages and conditions, this would be a practical move, for these institutions, despite our efforts, are fairly strongly established.'[35]

The movement could not consolidate its gains from the 1934–35 campaign. Hannington returned to the theme of the camps from time to time, drawing parallels, directed towards fellow-communists and trade-union militants, between the centres and the Nazi labour service and even punitive labour camps—citing as evidence praise from the Royal Commission on Unemployment for 'voluntary labour schemes' in Germany and Sweden (Hannington did not mention that their *Final Report* was issued in 1932, many months before the Nazi seizure of power),[36] as well as comments made by genuine enthusiasts for the Nazi cause.[37] However, from 1936 those NUWM activists who were most staunchly anti-fascist were themselves enlisting in the fight for Spanish democracy; by October 1937 three members of the movement's national council had died in Spain; no more national marches were held, and the only major regional march was the Scots march on Edinburgh in 1938.[38]

The 'slave camp' campaign never dominated the movement's activities, and was only a major theme in 1934–35.

In at least one case, though, the 'slave camp' campaign took deeper root. Glenbranter, sixteen miles from Dunoon, saw far the largest number of organized protests of any instructional centre between 1935 and 1939, and this was at least in part the work of the NUWM. In a classic United Front tactic, the movement had encouraged Glasgow Trades Council to join a labour movement visit to Glenbranter in 1934, which had found that 'while the camp is situated in beautiful surroundings the life was very dull and monotonous. Some of the deputation described it as a "cemetery" and the men as "living dead men".'[39]

Subsequently, Glenbranter was the subject of several parliamentary questions by West Fife's Communist MP, Willie Gallagher. At a guess, Glenbranter was special because of its high proportion of unemployed communists and ILPers, also experienced trade unionists. In general, though, the NUWM's active members were probably unrepresentative of the younger, unskilled, long-term unemployed who went into the centres. The NUWM, moreover, was strongest where its energies were devoted to local organizing and casework, building sustained campaigning activities—such as the hunger marches—on a well-established and lively tradition of branch organizing. Robin Page Arnot, then a firm supporter of the 'class against class' line, complained in 1930 that the NUWM had become 'a kind of specialised trade union' rather than a mass campaigning organization; there was some truth in the accusation.[40] The 'slave camp' campaign, combining trade union forms and mass campaigning, illustrates the NUWM's tendency to institutionalize struggles which attracted support from temporary coalitions of the highly politicized workers (and to a lesser extent intellectuals) who accepted Communist or ILP leadership, and the unemployed who tended to be aroused by more immediate concerns.

At times, then, the NUWM organized highly effectively around the camps. They kept the trainees' conditions before the public eye; they acted as a watchdog whose bark, on at least two occasions, prevented more serious encroachments upon trainees' civil liberties. They even,

briefly, organized within the camps. Overall, though, the NUWM was too inconsistent in its attentions (and, it has to be added, too dishonest in some of its propaganda) to be able to construct a coalition around the camps. Nor, other than a purely negative rejection of Fordism, did the NUWM have anything in the way of a politics of training. In both its strengths and failings, of course, the NUWM faithfully reproduced the characteristics of its communist parentage. And ultimately, like a child, despite all the quarrels over its independence, its loyalty remained not with the unemployed, breaking stones and grubbing up roots in their forest camps, but with the CPGB and, through it, with the Socialist Fatherland beyond.

Wider labour movement responses

British communism, though, was a small and often embattled part of organized labour. It would be quite wrong to believe, as is sometimes suggested, that the communists alone agitated among the unemployed and brought them into the public sphere via the street; while mainstream Labour and the TUC, who were 'insiders', tried to speak on behalf of the unemployed but, as it were, from a distance. Neat twofold divisions are always attractive, and usually misleading. What this conventional account can miss are wide differences in the political perspectives of those who, regardless of other differences, would all have claimed to be democratic socialists.

In the Independent Labour Party, also sharply critical of the camps, the argument turned on the injustice of industrial training. Giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Unemployment, two of the party's Clydeside MPs, George Buchanan and Campbell Stephen, complained that 'you are using the training centres as labour colonies. They are not training centres at all; they are places of detention.' Campbell Stephen derided the reconditioning argument:

> if I were getting run down, I would possibly go to a home where I would have the opportunity of walking and golfing and all the rest of it. Take, for instance, the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour. You would never think,

> when he got run down owing to his worry with the two and a half millions unemployed, of sending him to the Carstairs training centre to build up his muscles, and I do not want the unemployed treated differently....[41]

Maybe it was ironic that the ILP, which had helped inspire the utopian vision of the labour colony, should act as Labour's conscience over the instructional centres. It was, though, powerless in the Labour government to affect policy, and after its disaffiliation from the Labour party in 1932 its contribution was limited to parliamentary debate and local work through United Front committees and the NUWM. James Maxton and Fenner Brockway were co-signatories of a joint ILP–Communist party appeal in 1935, whose five demands included 'mass opposition to the slave camps and solidarity with those who refuse to enter these camps',[42] but differences on Spain and the Moscow Trials drove the Communists and ILP apart once more.

Apart from the ILP, if it can be counted as part of the mainstream, organized labour was at best ambivalent about the unemployed. The trade union movement, with the signal exception of the South Wales Miners' Federation, barely seemed aware until the late 1930s that the instructional centres existed. After the calamities of 1926, effective union control over employer recruitment practices was (with local exceptions) negligible, and unions like like the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, who officially refused to recognize government training centre courses, found themselves increasingly powerless to resist the recruitment of semi-skilled men who had a bare six months' training behind them.[43] So far as oversea training was concerned, British unions uneasily balanced hopes of shorter dole queues at home with support for Australian and Canadian comrades demanding restrictions on low-wage immigrant labour. Few trades unionists gave active support to training schemes, though in 1928 the Durham Miners' Association co-operated with labour exchanges, to find a hundred young single miners to train for farm work overseas, and later helped the UAB find and train unemployed miners for land settlement.[44] After the mining disaster of 1934, the Gresford Relief Committee considered whether it should send

orphaned children to Western Australia for 'training' as domestic servants and farm labourers.[45] But these were small-scale, stop-gap and local measures.

Union interests were more closely affected by the skills training carried out in government training centres than the instructional centres' 'reconditioning'. TUC evidence to the 1932 Royal Commission made no reference to TICs; though arguing that the 'morale and skill' of the unemployed should be preserved, its main concern was with the way that semi-skilled trainees from the GTCs were displacing skilled labour and overcrowding the labour market.[46] In early 1930, the TUC was consulted about the question of compulsory training. Bondfield reported to the Cabinet that 'they fully approve in principle [but] make the reservation that the procedure proposed should not be applied to attendance at the handymen centres but only to attendance at the Transfer Instructional Centres.'[47] In autumn 1930, when the General Council asked for a greater union say over training policy, TUC interest still lay entirely with the activities of the GTCs, whose ex-trainees were facing difficulties with the larger construction firms because of union antagonism.[48] 'Reconditioning' was, for most unions other than the miners, a peripheral problem. The revival of the compulsory principle under Section 40 was noted in the General Council's annual report for 1935 without comment.[49]

Nor, in most parts of the country, was the picture very different at local level, where communist influence was limited by bans on Party activity in trades councils and even in branch life in some unions, as well as by the party's own sectarianism. Only between 1934 and 1936, as it started to involve trades councils and ILP branches in United Front activities, was the NUWM able to bring the instructional centres before a wider audience. Even then, the results seem to have been limited, for United Front committees tended to represent primarily those bodies where the CP (or ILP) already had some standing and influence: the Glasgow deputation to Glenbranter in July 1934, for example, was drawn from the Trades Council, the Vehicle Builders', the Brass Moulders', the Communist party, the NUWM, and the 'Glasgow Campaign Committee';

delegations from Castleton and mid-Wales seem to have consisted of local United Front committees.[50] United Front activities did bring communists and ILPers into alliance with a broader constituency of active socialists and trade unionists. As the rationale of the United Front was to organize opposition to fascism and war, the existence of government labour camps combined with the threat posed by Part II raised the spectre of a peculiarly British road to fascism. The National Youth Congress Against War and Fascism, held in Sheffield in 1934, listed its fifth 'Task' as:

> To set up groups and councils among the young unemployed at the Labour Exchanges and in the training camps, to conduct a struggle against militarization and for higher relief. To campaign for mass refusal on the part of the young unemployed to enter the concentration camps.[51]

The 630 delegates (including 111 from trade unions, 36 from ILP Guilds of Youth, 15 from the Labour League of Youth, and 12 from the ILP, with 74 from the Young Communist League and 34 from the Communist party) claimed to represent 180,311 'youth'. This was empty talk. There is no evidence of a council in any centre, nor that any union represented at the congress ever campaigned against the camps. From about 1936, the NUWM lost importance inside the CP; alongside the struggle in Spain, as the party managed slowly to win back some standing within the trade union movement, other issues were higher on the agenda.

For the Labour party, the centres only commanded attention in the later 1930s. They never were a major issue; party leaders accepted a 1939 conference decision calling for their abolition, but there was never any question of doing anything before the party was able to form a government. Attitudes towards the unemployed, in a party which believed in a planned growth-oriented economy, and therefore in the need for labour market co-ordination, were ambiguous. Two eminent Labour intellectuals told the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance that they favoured a 'National Labour Corps' of unemployed men; while G. D. H. Cole favoured a voluntary labour corps 'for the present', Beatrice Webb firmly believed that exchanges should have 'the means of ordering men

and women to put in a full-time attendance *somewhere*':

> I know of nothing more melancholy than the sight of idle young men in the mining villages.... You can see that many of them will obviously take to bad practices.'[52]

Bondfield's success in smuggling compulsion through in 1930 is then perhaps less than surprising.

For most of the thirties, official Labour policy on training, such as it was, reflected the unions' predominant concern with the skill centres. Conference did not discuss the instructional centres until the Durham Miners' motion in 1939, by which time there had been discussion in the North-East for some years: the MP for South Shields in 1936 took up the case of ten men who had lost benefit after quitting Allerton Centre in a dispute over food, while Jarrow local committee complained when asked by Durham county public assistance committee to send men to camps.[53] Ellen Wilkinson, Jarrow's MP, heard from a number of young unemployed men that 'they had not been taught anything' in Brandon, and found it no easier to get a job than before.[54] When Sam Watson (unemployment officer for the Durham Miners) moved the composite resolution on unemployment for the Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain, calling for their abolition, he was expressing what Wilkinson regarded as a 'reasoned' case against the centres, rather than the 'wild and whirling propaganda' of the NUWM.[55] Using the term 'slave camps' (also 'compounds'), Watson urged young men not to co-operate with UAB recruitment, complaining that the ex-trainee was 'a much worse citizen than before he went to the training camp'.[56] Documented unfairness and ineffectiveness, based on regional experience, rather than speculation about the camps' role as the instrument of Fascism or Fordism, provided the case on which Watson rested his argument. Other than the Welsh miners, no force within official Labour was placing the camps on the agenda until the later 1930s, when negative connotations of work camp movements provided a convenient stick with which to beat the National government.

Alienation and informal resistance inside the camps

For the NUWM leadership, the camps were understood as part of a capitalist strategy to secure domination over labour in a form which suited the age of Fordism and Nazism. For the ILP, they were another example of capitalism's unfairness, a criticism later combined by Labour's mainstream with the view that the camps were also inefficient. Only the NUWM organized systematically within the camps, and that only for relatively brief periods. What of the trainees, though? Were they prone to accept the justice of their situation, their ability to organize undermined by the break with their old social ties and sources of solidarity, their will to resist sapped by co-optation into camp government by the authorities?[57] The evidence, such as it is, seems to suggest that rather than outright rejection of the camp system, most trainees accepted their situation but without enthusiasm; as much as there were tendencies towards co-operation, trainees were also largely alienated and mainly went along with the authorities' demands for as long as they could tolerate them. However, unlike prisoners or concentration camp inmates, the trainees could always walk out—and many did. Ultimately, then, the trainees had a range of choice which is denied to inmates of most 'total institutions'.

Open action was generally provoked by the practical and mundane. The most frequent cause of unrest, by a long chalk, was food. Len Edmondson recalled that his brother helped organize a 'stay-in' at Kielder over food; food underlay a march on one camp manager's office in 1934 and a deputation to another in 1935; it was partly behind the trouble at Glenbranter in 1935, and was the main cause of unrest in a Welsh camp in the same year.[58] Complaints about food poured in to the NUWM in the mid 1930s. One trainee wrote of camp lunch in the middle of a forest, with 'two thick slices of bread like paving stones with some fat (I can't call it ham) or bully, and a small piece of cake'.[59] Another's meals were 'very bad, the supposed hot meals generally being served cold, and the meat is particularly tough'.[60] Trainees in Yorkshire told visiting trade unionists that on one miserable teatime 'almost raw

potatoes were served up together with pudding like leather and an apology for custard.'[61] Glasgow United Front delegation heard that Glenbranter served 'frozen meat and not properly cut. Sometimes it was like leather. The bread was always cut a day before it was required. The potatoes were bad. We did not meet one man who spoke well of the food.'[62]

Elsewhere, the meat had not seen a refrigerator for days—a powerful grievance in summer; in April 1935, a Welsh youth wrote home that 'My butty was having dinner on Monday and he had maggots in his food and we had a meeting over it.'[63] One man who enjoyed his course recalled that the cook, who 'must have been a pretty good chap', managed to turn 'some good food out, from the food he was given... generally the food was very poor'. His particular memory was of 'eggs which smelt terrible'.[64]

For trainees, food was a central part of life. In any enclosed and isolated institution, the quality and variety of the meals tends to assume a symbolic importance which they tend to lack at home. This was recognized by the Ministry of Labour in a 1938 recruitment brochure, whose illustrations included two colour photographs of centre canteens, claiming that:

> The menus are planned by experts on a dietetic basis to secure the maximum nutritional value. Skilled cooks working with up-to-date equipment prepare the meals. Specially selected trainees are given instruction in the kitchen and scullery and Staff Mess, with a view to employment later in hotels, boarding houses, etc.... The food is good and very plentiful. Four meals a day are served and big increases of weight are commonly recorded during the twelve weeks' course—as much as from one to two stone on occasion, and on the average over half a stone. Arrangements are made for men requiring special diet, and fish is served on Fridays for those who want it.[65]

Ellen Wilkinson's informants told her that the food at Brandon was 'better than we can get at home on the dole anyway',[66] so presumably the ministry was not just lying. But comparison could be more complicated than what 'we can get at home on the dole'. Engaged in heavy manual

labour every day, for these men the standard of the food was doubly important; they compared it with what they might have eaten had they been working and at home, whereas the Ministry of Labour's standard comparison tended to be the food that unemployed families might expect.

Certainly no other issue came close to causing so much unrest. Discipline, for example, rarely caused much unrest—at least, not directly. Wilkinson's constituents did not 'allege any military discipline at Brandon',[67] but the ministry was sensitive to criticism on the issue. One officially published account of camp life, 'by an Unemployed Worker', claimed that

> The method of bed-making was about the only thing in the camp that had any relation to army life. As for discipline, well, you were expected to play the game and behave yourself, but apart from that life in camp was run more on the lines of a holiday centre than anything else.[68]

A Scottish radio broadcast by another ex-trainee pointedly concluded that the centre imposed 'nothing like the slave camp conditions I had heard so much about'.[69] Discipline was not at the root of any major protest in the camps; it apparently was at the root of only small-scale resistance. Victimization was an issue in one 1934 strike, while pay was a contributory issue at Glenbranter in 1938; grumbles about bedding and boredom were persistent but produced no organized protest.[70]

The most intractable problem—since food was remediable—was what the authorities defined as 'morale'. For many trainees, being 'reconditioned' could often seem pointless. This was the main grievance of those who were in fact already well-socialized into the work ethic, such as Wilkinson's informants, who complained that they learnt nothing, being switched from task to task with little or no explanation.[71] A survey of ex-trainees from South Wales in 1937 found widespread dissatisfaction, not so much with conditions in the camps as with their overall lack of purpose:

> Many men objected to the idea of segregation in country districts, while others objected because attendance at the Centre was no guarantee of subsequent work. Several felt that the nature of the work undertaken at the

> camp was of no particular importance, and that if it were, Trade Union rates of wages should be paid.... Questioned as to the work performed at an Instructional Centre, an ex-trainee replied 'Cutting down trees'. Asked 'Why?' his reply was 'God knows'. This reply epitomises a major criticism of the Centres.[72]

As officially organized, life in the camps, the author reported, had no direction. Young unemployed men were asked to invest twelve weeks of their lives in what appeared to them as purposeless activity, and with no guarantee of work at the end.

Judged by wastage rates, many trainees developed a peripheral identification with their role. Some simply messed around: one young man in 1931, for example, was sent home after three weeks in a centre because, according to the manager, he 'has not shown any real desire to become proficient... but seems unable to take his work seriously and has been a nuisance in his section.'[73] General wastage rates, extremely high in the centres' first three years, fell dramatically during the years of worst unemployment, reaching 8 per cent of all terminations in 1933 and 1934; subsequently they rose steadily, to 19 per cent in 1936, 26 per cent in 1937, and 31 per cent in 1938.[74] Individual protest—whether simple quitting or behaviour likely to bring about expulsion—was not to be taken lightly, since it could lead to loss of benefits; it was risky for trainee and trainee's family alike; yet once the economy started to recover, and there was the possibility of work, growing numbers opted out. Individual withdrawal involved far more men than any NUWM campaign; it was a quiet demonstration that, whilst life at a centre might not be unbearable, many preferred to take their chances outside.

The alienation and purposelessness of camp life were also expressed in senseless outbursts of violence among the trainees. As well as sporadic fighting between the men, William Heard remembered an apparently senseless act of vandalism in the recreation hut:

> there was lantern-slides on. And somebody comes through the door and shouts 'There's a fire!' We took no notice, just threw something at the chap. Anyway, when we got outside, the place was on fire. So, go outside, the first thing you see a man picking up a stone and smashing all the windows. It

> was idiotic, you know... so I said we'd go down to the officer's mess, see what's in there.... First thing I saw, there was a great big chest as big as the door; china, all china. The rest of us ate off enamel, of course. And on top of it was a dish of fruit, bananas and stuff like this. 'Ooh,' I thought, 'I'm having that, I'll be the first'.... So, all the rest of the men came in; there was a little billiard table, they caught hold of this billiard table, took it out and threw it into the field, which smashed it all to pieces. And the same with the china. They took hold of this great big crate of china and out with it. They were just releasing their feelings. We enjoyed that.[75]

An ex-boiler room orderly called Kielder 'a very lonely Camp, 9 miles to the nearest pub, no Bus service, the men often got a bit naughty'.[76] Some inmates, like Heard, recalled suicides.

Oppositional views of training?

This survey of oppositional reactions to the centres suggests that no alternative model of training was generated. Trainees' reactions must be distinguished from those of both the NUWM and communists on the one hand and official Labour on the other. Though for most of the time all three groups shared a marked lack of interest in the centres, oppositional responses followed three broadly separate tracks; the communists and NUWM saw industrial training as an attempt to inculcate a 'slave mentality' in order to fit the working class for Fordist assembly-line production, and to prepare it for war and/or fascism; official labour was untroubled by it until the later 1930s, when it presented one more opportunity for criticizing the government; those trainees who went beyond grumbles over bedding or food to question the legitimacy of the system did so largely through individual withdrawal, real or metaphorical.

Explicitly political critiques of the centres, then, tended to focus on extrinsic factors rather than their training role. Often the communists and NUWM would seek to prove the centres' guilt by associating them with the Nazi Deutsche Arbeitsdienst, often, as has been seen, using distorted evidence to do so. Similarly, in so far as the NUWM and CPGB paid any

attention to women in their attacks on the 1934 Bill, it was to condemn clauses allowing the recruitment of women claimants into training 'to accept slave conditions or starve' and thus breaking up the family.[77] At the same time, though, the Communists were able to identify tendencies in the economic and political context which they believed explained the appearance of the 'slave camps' at this stage in the history of British capitalism; they had, then, at least the beginnings of a theory of training.

Official Labour meanwhile reacted on at least two levels. At local level, where Labour party councillors and trade union officials held real responsibilities, mainstream Labour found itself in the familiar position of having to administer a system of which it increasingly disapproved, even if its disapproval was turned more towards the disciplinary forms or disappointing outcomes of the centres rather than the policy assumptions on which they were based. At national level, the party and TUC were constrained in their response by trade union fears of the labour market implications of skills training. If they thought about the long-term unemployed, Labour's leaders may have quietly shared the commonplace view that they had 'gone soft', and would present a continued challenge to any government committed to full employment. Official Labour had neither a conventional policy for training, nor—with the demise of the labour-colony movement—a vision of a socialist alternative. When a genuinely alternative and utopian movement—Grith Fyrd's forest communities—arose which was inspired not by official Labour, or indeed communism, but by Quaker humanitarianism and the 'eco-socialism' of the Woodcraft movement, official Labour neither supported nor discouraged it, but kept it at arm's length (the communists reportedly denounced Grith Fyrd as proto-fascist).[77] All trends of thought in the labour movement broadly shared the productivist assumptions on which the existing training policy was based. Unemployment, in this paradigm, could only be solved by economic growth and the consequent recovery of British industry. Training had to support that ulterior goal.

9

Comparisons and Contrasts: differing approaches to the pedagogy of labour

The pedagogy of labour is a feature of the modern world. If the most spectacular approaches to teaching through exposure to work can be found in the Soviet and German work camp systems at their peak, more mundane yet still sizeable programmes have been used everywhere for such groups as prisoners or young people or the adult unemployed. Similarly almost every nation has, at some time, established work camps. Names differ, but it is possible to identify some kind of remote labour system for a group or subgroup of citizens who are defined in some way as marginal to or even outside the wider socio-economic community. What unifies these systems, and makes it possible to speak of them in the same breath, are the central place accorded to labour and remote living; but it is labour which provides their raison d'être.

Work camp systems were so prevalent in the inter-war years in particular that it is extremely tempting to argue that it was simply the peculiar and tragic history of our century—Auschwitz and the Gulag—which brought the work camp system to an abrupt end. Or was it such a clean break? After all, we still have work camps (for example the farm prisons of today's United States), though functioning more often in systems of incarceration than as instruments of labour policy. This gives us a clue to the demise of work camp systems within the labour markets of capitalist nations. Above all, the British experience suggests that the system was fatally weakened by its internal fragility, which in turn arose from its lack of legitimacy in a society which placed such high value in its dominant ideology upon the consent of the governed and on the freedom of labour. The question then arises of whether this was true of other work-camp systems.

Britain was among the first western nations to develop a coherent system of state-run work camps in response to the inter-war crisis. In their early years the transfer instructional centres had few competitors. Labour Service had been compulsory in Bulgaria since 1921, with the twin aims of transforming the economy and re-educating young men and women towards productive rather than intellectual labour; the men lived in barracks, the women with their families, neither receiving any pay; work camps proper arrived in Bulgaria in 1934, and were voluntary.[1] Elsewhere such systems as existed before 1929 were voluntary, at least in name; only as large-scale unemployment became widespread, following the Crash, were compulsory systems introduced. The nature of compulsion itself differed enormously. In some cases—as in Nazi Germany—there was a form of universal conscription into work camps. Other nations operated relief camps: while there was no legal obligation on the citizen to enter a camp, welfare was not available outside. What all held in common was the principle that the state might direct a citizen into a residential institution where he—and occasionally she—was to undergo a corrective period of regular heavy manual labour. As a policy, this is often associated with the fascist state. Yet while it is true that Nazi Germany possessed work camps, Fascist Italy managed without them; and while such diverse democracies as Britain, Czechoslovakia and the United States had work camps, France and Ireland did not; the British camps, to confuse matters further, operated on the British mainland but not in Northern Ireland. Unemployment relief had nothing to do with the Soviet Union's work camps, which were explicitly part of the penal system, as in a more extreme and terrifying form were the concentration and extermination camps of Nazi Germany, and they form no part of this account.

Work camps in the English-speaking world

The work camps of Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States were responses to the sharp surge in unemployment after the Great Crash; they have as many and varied predecessors as did the transfer

instructional centres. Whereas in Britain the unemployment rate only once dipped below 10 per cent —in 1927, and then only briefly—the economies of North America and Australasia experienced a relative boom throughout the 1920s, with agriculture remaining reasonably buoyant and industry, particularly in the USA, apparently growing without end. The 1929 slump brought about an alarming, and completely unexpected, rise in unemployment levels. Figures for North America are vague (and for New Zealand and Australia are non-existent), but within a year of the Crash six millions were thought to be without work in the United States; by 1933 about eight million Americans were out of work, with unemployment rates of around 50 per cent in many of the industrial cities.[2] The Dominion government estimated that some 379,000 Canadians were unemployed by September 1931, roughly two-thirds of them in Ontario (130,000) and Quebec (100,000).[3] Without any insurance scheme on the German and British model, unemployed workers took such public or charitable relief as was available, hit the roads in the hope of work, stole, or starved. In each case, they posed a challenge to public policy, visible on every main road. British Columbia alone had an estimated 12,000 transients by early 1932; in the States there were thought to be around two millions. Attention was focussed even more sharply after the Scottsboro case, a racial cause célèbre in which two young black men were tried on the almost certainly trumped-up charge of raping two young white women on a freight train; all four were tramps.[4]

Only in New Zealand did the national state accept financial responsibility for the unemployed. The New Zealand government also had some experience, albeit limited, of dealing with large scale unemployment through the provision of relief work, managed since the 19th century by the Public Works Department and the State Forest Service, only bringing local authorities in from 1926.[5] In Canada and the USA, the unemployed remained largely a local responsibility; previous phases of crisis had been handled largely by state, county, or provincial authorities, private charities, and the unemployed themselves. Initial responses to the crisis reflected these inherited patterns. The New Zealand government was first to respond; the 1930 Unemployment Act established an Unemployment

Fund, financed by a levy on non-Maori adult male workers, which could be used to subsidize temporary schemes and payments to families.[6] By 1932, it was clear in the United States that some form of public relief, supported by federal money, was necessary if only to avoid serious unrest: war veterans were marching on Washington, a hunger march in Dearborn ended in violent attacks upon unemployed demonstrators by the town's police and Ford company thugs; private charities had exhausted their funds, states and cities were facing the alternatives of bankruptcy or near-starvation.

Work camps solved the riddle of how to respond to the terrifying economic crisis without breaching the good old principle that there could be no pay without work. In New Zealand the Unemployment Board opened relief camps for single white men (and married white men in Auckland) in 1931; by September 1932 some 3,665 unemployed were in the camps, engaged in road-building, land reclamation, drainage and afforestation.[7] British Columbia's provincial government opened 200 lumber and construction camps in autumn 1931 for the unemployed of Vancouver, with a special 'light camp' for the less robust, and by June 1932 there were 237 camps in the province with a capacity of some 18,340 men. Initially offering work for a wage to all male unemployed, the camps were subsequently confined to offering subsistence work to single younger men.[8] Similar local government initiatives had developed in the USA: in Washington, California, and Roosevelt's home state of New York, county and state officials had co-operated with the federal Forest Service in opening up work camps for the unemployed, and further proposals were under discussion in 1932.[9] Nation-wide work camp schemes were launched in Canada in 1932 and in the following year the USA followed suit.

None of these schemes was particularly influenced by the British example; the reverse if anything, for Britain was seen more as an example of the demoralization brought about by entitling unemployed people to relief—a 'dole'—as a right;[10] Hill and Lubin's study of British policies acknowledged the role of the instructional centres, but was not available until 1934, by which time the New Deal was well under way. If anyone

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had been inspired by the German Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst before 1933, they were not likely to admit it afterwards. Rather than imitations of established practice elsewhere, work camps were presented as imaginative solutions to indigenous socio-economic problems.

Early proposals in Canada seem to have been inspired by a combination of respect for the discipline and organization of the armed forces with fear that the nation's identity and its agricultural values were under threat. Military metaphors were common in debates about the need to mobilize the unemployed: J. S. Woodsworth, leader of the Liberal party, urged the recruitment of a 'peace army' to be sent into the frozen north, while the chair of the British Columbia district of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association called for the government to establish 'labour battalions'. From 1931 the Dominion government agreed to contribute half the costs of the provincial 'sustenance camps'. Draft plans for national relief camps were drawn up by the Army's Major-General McNaughten, whose aides subsequently produced the final proposals embodied in an Order in Council in October 1932;[11] four months later, the Minister of Labour was justifying the programme with the assertion that 'it is not debatable that our population is decidedly disproportionate as between urban and rural'.[12] In 1933 the Department of National Defence started to open its own camps, exclusively for the relief of unemployed, homeless single young men, taking responsibility for the management of the camps from the Ministry of Labour and, in theory temporarily, from the provincial governments.[13] The shift from local to national responsibility was rapid, as was the development of the relief-camp programme; its location in the Department of National Defence (where, as the judge advocate-general coyly pointed out, 'novel and intricate' workloads were produced as a result)[14] made short-term sense in a nation with no history of national initiative in public labour-market policy on this scale.

Even greater speed marked the birth of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the United States. The first detailed proposals for the administration of what was then called the Emergency Conservation Corps appeared before the four relevant federal departments in April 1933; by 1 July some 275,000 young men had been enrolled in 1,300

camps,[15] the initial opposition of the War Department and the American Federation of Labor had largely been overcome, and popular enthusiasm had been deliberately and successfully generated. As in Canada, primary administrative responsibility lay not with the labour but the armed forces ministry; and as in Canada, what had previously been a regional authority initiative was subsumed into a national state responsibility.

Thus far there were a number of similarities between the three sets of policies. Governments established work camps primarily because they were a means of delivering relief in exchange for heavy manual labour, in a disciplined and organized setting; political risks were minimized, while the unemployed themselves were removed from the urban areas and dispersed to useful but remote labour. All three governments found ways of moving extremely quickly once the policy was agreed, despite the absence of any developed pattern of previous residential training or relief work for unemployed men. The work involved was remarkably similar in nature: the CCC worked in forests and National Parks, and took on a number of public works projects including dam building; the Canadian camp workers were employed largely in civil engineering and forestry, as were the New Zealanders. Finally, and in strong distinction to the British case, although the camps' corrective function was important, their primary role was less to 'recondition' unemployed youths than find a politically acceptable method of handing them welfare or subsistence payments.

There were also significant differences between the three systems. Administratively, two were in government departments whose primary responsibility was the armed forces; while the Canadian and United States armies had some sophisticated knowledge of training, and experience of large-scale man management, great care was taken to present the relief camps as a civilian rather than a military project: there would, it was made plain, be no military discipline in either case, men were free to quit if they wished, and the projects would essentially be of a peaceful nature.[16] The New Zealand scheme remained in the Public Works Department, and was the direct responsibility of the Unemployment Board. The location of administrative responsibility mattered; where army officers

were responsible, it was less likely that the relief camps might potentially be used as part of a more coherent attempt at intervention in the labour market (though as the British case shows, this likelihood was not always realized in the event). Camps administered by the military were also, in relatively non-militarist countries like Canada, more likely to be seen as a temporary measure, an emergency stop-gap which was not part of the nation's future.

That future, as it turned out, was indeed to be shaped by war. Only the Canadian scheme was abandoned before 1939, mainly because the army was unable to contain the high levels of unrest among camp workers, but also because it was seen as an inefficient means of managing the problems of unemployment and relief.[17] Between 1932 and 30 June 1936, when the camps closed, they provided work for some 170,291 young Canadians (see table 9.1).[18] A small number of forestry summer relief camps survived into 1940, providing work together with classes in first aid and citizenship and sports for unemployed men aged 18 to 25; there were also eighteen home service training schools for women.[19] This was small compared with the CCC, which still had 160,000 enrollees in 900 camps shortly before Pearl Harbor; Roosevelt even claimed that the state of war increased the need for the corps' civilian activities, and Congress decided as late as June 1942 to vote down the CCC's appropriation.[20] The CCC throughout had been considerably larger than any of the comparable work camp programmes, and it had for most of its life been far more popular with ordinary men and women. By contrast, organized protest was stronger and more persistent within the Canadian programme than in any other, to an extent which brought the whole scheme to its knees and contributed to the fall of a government.

The Canadian relief camps

Opposition to the Canadian relief camps started early. It also garnered widespread support, drawn not only from the unemployed but from several other parts of the labour movement, finally finding voice at the Trades and Labour Congress, forerunner of today's Canadian Labour

Congress. It was largely thanks to this broad critical consensus over the work camps that the Canadian Communist party was able to play such a prominent role in the later 1930s, establishing itself as the voice of unemployed Canada. Communist-led unemployed movements invariably tried to organize in labour camp systems, but only in Canada did they manage to found a successful camp workers' movement.

Table 9.1 : Relief camps operated by the department of National Defence, Canada, 1932–36

Year	No of Camps	Men enrolled
1932	–	–
1933	21	–
1934	123	53,093
1935	156	63,387
1936	144	50,691

Source: Department of National Defence (Canada), Annual Reports

It took little more than a year for the communists to organize successfully inside the camps. At first, the Communist Party of Canada's unemployed organization was more concerned with organizing among the large numbers of men congregated in the major cities; but as unemployed workers continued—despite a communist boycott campaign—to enter the camps, the unemployed organization established a Relief Camp Workers' Union, while the CPC encouraged some of its unemployed activists to enrol.[21] Their criticisms were echoed elsewhere: the Mine Workers' Union, conscious of the dangers of strike-breaking at a time when its members in Drumkeller were engaged in a bitter struggle,

urged the abolition of the 'slave camps' at its annual conference in May 1933.[22] More cautiously, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, at its 49th Annual Convention, passed a report of the executive committee which

> while recognising that the acceptance by the Federal government of the responsibility to provide these men with food, shelter, clothing, and other necessities was a step in the direction long urged by organised labour, emphatically declared that the conditions under which this was done could not be accepted as in any way satisfactory.

The TLC also called for the removal of the camps from military control.[23] In March 1935, the Women's Central of the social-democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation repeated the demand for abolition.[24]

Inside the camps, meanwhile, resentment spilled over into a number of local strikes in 1933 and 1934. As in Britain, the grievances were superficially mundane: a threat to discontinue the tobacco ration as an economy measure started a walkout at Jones Hill Camp which spread to a dozen other camps in British Columbia in summer 1933, for instance.[25] In Canada, though, dislike for the camps was generalized into open revolt: from March 1935 the RCWU openly prepared for a national strike, starting on 2 April at Squamish; within two days some 1,500 had marched on Vancouver, where they remained for two months. With little to show for their efforts but a decision to hold a public inquiry, around 1,000 strikers decided to ride to Ottawa on the railroad, to find a national platform for their grievances; before the Trekkers could reach Winnipeg, where 3,000 men from other camps were said to be waiting to join the Trek, they were attacked and halted at Regina by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The 'On to Ottawa Trek' ended in a rout, with prison sentences for some of the leaders. On a longer view, though, the trek can be seen to have undermined the legitimacy of the camp system, and contributed towards the Bennett government's defeat in the 1935 election.[26]

Organization in the Canadian camps reached uniquely high levels. It remains uncertain whether this reflects communist leadership rather than the effects of bread-and-butter—or tobacco—grievances combined

with a long tradition of militant unionism in the railway and logging camps. Certainly there was evidence of both immediate grievances and more political claims in the strikers' own demands. The Commission of Inquiry into the camps, which began its investigations as the strike started, was told that the RCWU demanded:

1. trade union rates of pay for all work done;
2. relief camp workers to come under the workmen's compensation laws (allowing them to claim against injuries);
3. abolition of military control and no blacklisting of RCWU members;
4. recognition of elected camp committees;
5. a system of non-contributory national unemployment insurance;
6. the right to work;and
7. the repeal of vagrancy, immigration, and all other 'anti-working class laws'[27]

The MacDonald Commission ruled these demands largely outwith its brief, and stuck to the grievances that had been levelled against the camp system, most of which it believed were anyway groundless. Nonetheless, its analysis of the unrest did point to a number of features of the Canadian system which undoubtedly contributed to the camps' unpopularity.

First and foremost, it found that the absence of a wage encouraged 'either an attitude of hopeless indifference or of studied rebellion' which was 'a fruitful field for exploitation by the agitator and trouble maker'. Migrant workers normally entered logging, mining and construction camps because there was money in it; at the end of the contract they had their savings to fall back on. The relief camp workers had no such long-term goal to look forward to; and, because they were mostly young men, brooded on 'the apparent hopelessness of their position, and the loss of years in which they might be fitting themselves for higher positions in life'. Further, recreation facilities in the isolated camps were often limited: libraries were thin (sometimes consisting largely of women's magazines), recreation halls were ill lit and poorly stocked, there were hardly any lectures or entertainments. Above all, there was a 'growing conviction' among 'most of the men that they are a forgotten group'.[28] To

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the list of grievances should be added the probability that not all relief-camp workers were city boys; some were loggers, used to hard work, a steady wage, and informal camp organisation. Communists—a number of whom, like Ronald Liversedge, had trade union experience back in Britain—found that once the boycott strategy was abandoned, it was possible if only fleetingly to recruit camp workers into their own union, giving grievance an organized form.

Far from restoring morale and providing an incentive to work, the Commission found that the camps were themselves demoralizing and dispiriting places. A further committee of inquiry into the relief camp system was appointed in November 1935; while it deliberated, government raised the men's fee from 20¢ a day to 50¢ or $15 monthly, half to be saved on the man's behalf and half to be paid while in camp; government also renewed the Army's authority to continue the camps until 1 July 1936. On that day, the last camps closed; some 10,000 unemployed single men were transferred to railway track labouring.[29] The passing of the scheme was almost entirely unlamented.

The Civilian Conservation Corps

The Civilian Conservation Corps was, by contrast, almost universally popular. This is not to say that the CCCers did not organize; a number of spontaneous strikes broke out; as in Britain and Canada, food caused a number of the stoppages, as did the 11 pm camp curfew. The one serious disturbance in the early years came in 1934, when men in a Maine camp refused en masse to transfer to Maryland. In 1937 men from the Pennsylvania coalfields struck over workloads in five CCC camps in the Shenandoah National Park, leading to the dismissal of over 100 enrollees.[30] There was, though, little to compare with the sophisticated organization and mass support of the Canadian Relief Camp Workers' Union. Nor is there evidence of informal resistance, bubbling away beneath a cheery surface: 'desertion rates', at around 11.5 per cent in 1934 and rising to 20 per cent by late 1938, were no worse than wastage rates in the British instructional centres; cases of 'desertion' increased as the trade

cycle improved, bringing rumours and sometimes real offers of jobs.[31] Socialist and communist unemployed organizations, though officially allowed to distribute their literature, were never able to gain a toehold in the camps.[32] And if organized resistance was weak, spontaneous protest was rare. There seem to have been fewer disturbances in the CCC than the British or Canadian camps, and despite a constant preoccupation with discipline on the part of both the corps' director, the trade unionist Robert Fechner, and the War Department, nothing in the corps' record suggests that its problems were any worse than those facing its British and Canadian counterparts. Given the CCC's size, this alone is quite remarkable.

It is, of course, possible that the CCC's apparent popularity is illusory, a product of imaginative and effective marketing techniques. Certainly the CCC was presented and packaged with great care. The director was a trade unionist, and the administration worked long and hard to gain the tolerance and eventual support of the American Federation of Labor for the Corps. Roosevelt's own marketing techniques—ranging from the cosy 'fireside chats' on the wireless to careful sampling and personal responses to correspondents—were applied to the CCC to such effect that the president found himself unable to persuade the Democrats to sanction cuts in its budget during the run-up to the 1936 election.[33] In American political life, it was always wise to remember that a CCC camp in the neighbourhood—provided it was not a camp for black workers in a white area—supplied a useful pork barrel for the party men.[34] Within the CCC, everything was done to imbue enrollees with a corporate spirit, exemplified in the title of its official newspaper, *Happy Days*. Camp commanders had standing instructions to report all news items 'which reflect adversely on the administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps', and prepare press releases 'from time to time' on enrollees from particular areas and other human interest stories which could be sent to local newspapers.[35]

The marketing of the CCC bore all the hallmarks of a proficient and professional organization that was able to affect popular attitudes to itself. Yet there were good material and ideological reasons for the favour

in which the corps stood. For the unemployed young man, it offered relief: food, clothing, and not least a base pay rate of $30 monthly of which $25 was allotted to families at home—vital in a society where public relief was scarce and unreliable. Even communists were willing to enrol on these terms, despite misgivings about 'fascist' undertones to the New Deal in general and the CCC in particular; similarly unemployed blacks, despite the segregation in the camps, enrolled in thousands. The significant factor, though, was ideological: the CCC also offered young men the opportunity to participate in a vital national crusade, the enrollees waving goodbye at the railway stations in the belief that they were on their way to rebuild the nation, as in more than one respect they were.

CCC administrators treated the programme both as a crusade and as an opportunity for social reform. Growing attention was paid to the wider educational needs of the enrollees. By 1937 the corps' educational programme was not merely intended to 'eliminate illiteracy', help find work, and so forth. As camp commanders were told,

> The basic thought in providing a program of instruction and imparting instruction will be that of returning to the normal work-a-day world, citizens better equipped mentally and morally for their duties as such and with a better knowledge of the Government under which they live and of all that that Government means.

This involved at least ten hours a week of education and training, designed to 'develop pride and satisfaction in cooperative endeavour' and to encourage 'an understanding of the prevailing social and economic conditions, to the end that each man may cooperate intelligently in improving these conditions'. There were even classes in 'sex hygiene', with lantern slide courses on venereal disease and a prophylactic station in each camp where 'All men who have had illicit sexual intercourse will at once upon their return... report'.[16] Despite ingrained army fears of radicals (one commander banned all sociology textbooks, thinking them socialist tracts) the programme had considerable success: some 35,000 illiterates were reported to have learned how to read and write by June 1937, and forty universities were offering correspondence courses to

enrollees.[37] The corps' educational programme was closely bound up with its wider ideological mission: that of integrating into the corporate life of the nation the forgotten street corner youths, those potential citizens whose equipment was more than a little rusty.

Communist and socialist activities made little headway in the CCC. Both ran their own unemployed organizations, the Unemployed Councils in the case of the CP and the Unemployed Workers' Committees in the case of the Socialist party; the American Workers' party also built a surprisingly large Unemployed League in several states.[38] Especially courageous in their anti-racism, at a time when left-wing activists were frequently subject to violence, these interracial organizations campaigned over relief cutbacks and evictions; their primary aim in a nation with no guaranteed support for the unemployed was, though, as the unemployed councils put it, 'to gain security for the jobless'.[39] In this context, the existence of the CCC was peripheral to the main struggle, or even—as an acknowledgement of a federal responsibility—to be given a guarded welcome. Although there was segregation within CCC, with separate camps for black and white, and for native peoples too, there was no question whether blacks were being excluded (as they often were from locally-managed relief schemes). Nor was there any wider climate of hostility; American labour unions were less preoccupied with European models of unemployment insurance than their Canadian comrades, and thus were less likely to be attentive to the problems of work camps than satisfied that the federal government had at least done something about unemployment.

By and large, then, the communist-led unemployed movement had little interest in the CCC. In 1934—a time, remember, of enormous communist hostility towards 'social fascism'—the unemployed councils registered their protest with Fechner against the 'conduct of the Civilian Conservation Corps as a war move, low wages, poor conditions and discrimination against Negroes in the camps'. The UCs complained again in 1936 and 1941 of the CCC as a form of preparation for war.[40] They did not, though, manage, as the Canadians had done, to organize systematically within the camps. Moreover after 1935, as the New Deal

came under attack from the Right, and the CP started to absorb the implications of events in Europe, American communists came to abandon their earlier hostility to Roosevelt's measures, while unemployed organizations focussed primarily upon immediate struggles at the state or city, or even neighbourhood level.[41]

It would be wrong, though, to ascribe the CCC's popularity solely, or even mainly, to the weakness of potential centres of opposition. Conditions within the corps were not such as to provide a strong base for socialist or communist organisation. CCC enrollees never saw themselves as 'forgotten men'. Whereas the Canadian relief-camp workers felt themselves to be parked in the middle of nowhere and left to rot, the CCC men wore their uniforms with pride: the corps was effectively and rapidly marketed as a regular part of the New Deal, its achievements broadcast through the nation as testimony to the spirit and energy of America's previously neglected youth. Unlike the Canadian camps, the CCC was never criticized by mainstream trade unions after its first year; nor did unions ever organize in the camps—in contrast to New Zealand, where the Workers' Union ran a closed shop, negotiating a complex pay scale starting at 2s daily per man and establishing some degree of collective control over work conditions including regular breaks for a rest (heralded by the cry 'Smoke-oh!').[42] The US unions neither opposed the corps nor organized in it; nor were socialist or communist organizations ever able to claim a representative role, as did—if in a limited way—both the NUWM and RCWU in their respective countries.

CCC's public success appears to have been unique. It was the only work camp system that was both large-scale and innovatory, yet at the same time rested on widespread popular acceptance, amounting at times to enthusiasm. In Britain, the work camps were integrated into a labour-market strategy of sorts, albeit a narrowly conceived one that regarded the long-term unemployed as defective workpeople in need of 'reconditioning'. In Australia, a small number of 'sustenance camps' were established in some states from 1930 onwards to cater for the most impoverished; these 'susso camps' were visibly an emergency measure, and do not seem particularly to have attracted the attention of the

Unemployed Workers' movement.[43] In New Zealand, the camps fitted into an existing public works administrative framework and were thus readily acceptable. This was not true of either Canada or the USA, where the army departments were the only instruments available to the state which could manage such large numbers of men; but whereas life in the Canadian camps seemed purposeless and therefore vulnerable to the suspicion that men were simply being dumped in the vast forests in order to hide them from public sight, the CCC, like much of the New Deal, assumed the mantle of a popular crusade, building a new America on the ruins of Hooverism, bankers' ramps, and the Crash.

Work camps and labour service in Germany: 'symbol of the nation'

Germany, especially after 1933, presents obvious difficulties of analysis and a number of distinctions should be made at the outset. Though part of the same social and political order, the work camps were neither concentration nor extermination camps, nor was there any direct connection between the two systems. Moreover, the work camps in Germany, together with the wider organization of which they were part, predated the Nazi seizure of power in 1933.[44] What is most significant here, however, is the camps' functioning after 1933, and the light this sheds upon the pedagogy of labour and the uses to which it may be put.

In Germany, with its well-established unemployment insurance system, the principle and practice of work relief were widespread, if still small scale until 1931. It had been decided in 1923 to introduce a dual system of *Notstandsarbeit* ('emergency relief work'), paid just above standard benefit rates; and *Pflichtarbeit* ('duty work'), of short periods of paid work for those not entitled to benefit. Discipline was thorough, especially for the young (boy scout leaders were apparently urged to inform on juvenile relief workers seen smoking or in cinemas).[45] By 1925, relief was also being used to try to transfer labour from the cities to smaller towns and the countryside.[46] In 1931, a committee of specialists was appointed by the Brüning government to review Pflichtarbeit, and consider whether further measures including home colonization and

labour conscription should be adopted.[47] Despite the committee's opposition to conscription, a presidential decree of 5 June extended compulsory Pflichtarbeit from the under-21s to all unemployed as a condition of benefit, and introducing limited state support for voluntary labour service (*Freiwillige Arbeitsdienst*, or FAD), which it also opened up to unemployed women.[48] Voluntary Labour Service regulations, issued in August, amplified the rules: funds from the unemployment insurance scheme would be given for the FAD only where no other support was available; normally, municipalities and *Land* governments would bear the costs of subsidizing FAD, which was to be organized by local authorities and voluntary organizations, and ideally delivered through residential work camps.[49] Some voluntary organizations—churches, youth movements, and so on—had already developed their own work schemes before the Brüning decree, some as far back as the early 1920s.[50] These included a number of nationalist political movements such as the Stahlhelm, but although the Nazis sponsored a Labour Service Congress in 1928 its role was relatively minor up to 1933. Responsibility for coordinating this extraordinary network was given by a decree of 5 June to the Institute for Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance; but the movement remained essentially a voluntary one.

Most of the men's work was undertaken on land improvement, the preparation of rural settlements, allotment development, public communications and public health improvements; women worked, on largely domestic tasks, in non-residential centres in or near their home towns. The inducement to attend, apart from subsistence (board and lodgings were provided by the sponsoring body or the local authority), was the award of a certificate on completion, which apparently helped with finding work.[51] By the time the Nazis gained power, FAD was already well-rooted: there were already some 96,000 volunteers on schemes in summer 1932, rising to 285,000 during the mass unemployment of the winter, roughly a quarter of whom were engaged in residential schemes of one kind or another; almost all were men.[52] By this time, though, the broad objectives of FAD did not significantly differ from those of the Instructional Centres or the Civilian Conservation Corps. As von Papen's

government expressed it in 1932, 'The voluntary labour service gives young Germans an opportunity to perform significant work for the public good on a voluntary basis, and at the same time to undergo training for physical, mental and moral fitness.'[53] The intention was primarily to remove numbers of unemployed temporarily from the labour market (although it was also hoped that the best would be settled on the land)—again, a feature of the other schemes.

For the many voluntary organizations who had run labour camps, though, the purposes were more diverse, and more utopian. Most of the sponsoring organizations saw themselves as movements, whose camps offered a free space for social experimentation, and a training ground for building new kinds of citizen. For some of the work camps movements the aim was to strengthen social bonds and give trainees a sense of self-value; for others, it was part of the process of nation building. For yet others it was a residential element in the wider process of popular education—indeed, as an ideal and a praxis, labour-service became a focus for prominent adult educators anxious to deploy their energies to better effect as the socio-economic crisis deepened and the independent adult education movement itself fell into increasing disarray. The foundation of the Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst was, according to Dudek, its leading historian, an attempt to bring this diverse movement under control and rapidly to institutionalize it. Within a brief time, many of the more radical ideological and utopian impulses were marginalized:

> Within the FAD, the associations which dominated were those who chiefly employed unemployed members, and the non-residential camps run by local government without any of the educational concerns of the social workers and popular educators. Educational measures and organized leisure played no or only a regulated rôle: compared with the camps of the popular education movement, the FAD-camps are expressions of a 'pedagogical meaninglessness' (Werner Picht), whose function lay in the social disciplining of jobless youngsters, and which politically prepared the way to the forced youth labour system.[54]

Within FAD there remained great diversity: Dudek lists paramilitary

forces, the popular education movement, church groups, sports associations, local government, socialist youth groups and trade unions, all of whom shared an interest in the pedagogy of labour. For all these groups, labour functioned as a means of service to the 'community' (defined variously, of course), of the subordination of individual interest to that of the collectivity.

Still treated primarily as an expedient device for alleviating unemployment, as it had been under Weimar, from 1934 Arbeitsdienst underwent a major transformation as a project which combined propaganda, political re-education and the affirmation of national unity with controlled intervention in the labour market. Originally suspicious to the extent of encouraging supporters to boycott it, the Nazi Party saw FAD's advantages on assuming power in March 1933. Responsibility for the service was transferred to the Interior Ministry in July; by February 1935 the FAD could be described by the *Völkischer Beobachter* as 'symbol of the nation'.[55] This enthusiasm was despite a fall in the numbers of participants, from 285,000 in November 1932 to around 200,000 in 1934.[56] Nazi enthusiasm for FAD as an expression and creator of national unity, apparent in summer 1933 when obligatory service for university students was declared by the new government, grew as voluntary organizations were co-opted and amalgamated into the Nazi state.

For the Nazis, the primary goal of the pedagogy of labour was the socialization of young men into their proper national identity and of young woman into their proper domestic identity. Labour meant service to the fatherland: Konstantin Hierl, the retired army officer who headed FAD, thought it an ideal means of overcoming class conflict to dress 'the son of the director and the young worker, the university student and the farmhand, in the same uniform, to set them the same table in common service to people and fatherland'.[57] Hitler's 1934 May Day speech developed the same theme:

> We want to destroy the arrogance with which unfortunately so many intellectuals feel that they must look down upon labour, and on the other hand we wish to strengthen in them self-confidence through their consciousness that they too can perform bodily work. But beyond this we wish

> to contribute to the mutual understanding of the different classes in order to reinforce the tie which binds together the community of the people.[58]

A group of English visitors in summer 1933—members of a Workers' Educational Association summer school, arriving after a vigorous debate about the morality of their tour—were taken to a camp of unemployed university graduates 'raising crops for their own consumption and sale'. All wore the same field-grey uniform, and attention 'was drawn to the democratic way of living—the Captain took his meals with the privates, and the Sergeant Major was on good terms with everyone.'[59]

What looked like 'democracy' to the WEA party was, in fact, the early symptom of the policy of social and cultural homogenization through co-operative labour. By June 1935, academics—including students—accounted for around seven per cent of the FAD membership, many times more than their share in the male population of working age. The bulk of the FAD, though, was drawn from the Artisanat, that depressed but proud sector of German society which had been promised so much by the Nazis and had so far received so little; industrial and rural workers, on the other hand, were very thinly represented indeed.[60] The imbalance worried the Nazi leaders, particularly in the light of a continuing flight of labour and population away from the land—a process that Arbeitsdienst was, increasingly, expected to help reverse.

Conscription was introduced in June 1935, and the service was renamed, first as the Deutscher Arbeitsdienst then Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD). Under the Federal Labour Service Act, 200,000 young men aged between 18 and 25 were called up for six months to work on various public utilities projects. The purpose, according to Article Three of the act, was 'in the spirit of National Socialism, to develop in the youth of Germany a sense of national solidarity, a true conception of labour, and, in particular, due respect for manual labour'.[61]

In addition, RAD was also used to regulate the labour market: it kept young men away from their own jobs or the need to find a job for half a year, allowing the regime to give priority to the older unemployed, and to jobless Party veterans. Finally, RAD carried out work of real significance to the government's economic goals. The need to overcome unemploy-

ment itself, and to be seen to be doing so, had been a major theme of Nazi economic thought in the early 1930s, and was a major theme behind the development of the New Plan in 1934, concerned as it was with rearmament and economic recovery more generally.[62] Contributing through its massive investment of labour in agriculture, forestry, land settlement, and to a less extent in road and homestead construction,[63] RAD visibly participated in the rebuilding of the German economy. It did so in the context of Nazi attempts to reverse the flight from the land, and to develop rural settlements and smallholdings in the eastern regions; the actual achievements were modest—just over 20,000 settlers between 1933 and 1938—and most RAD participants found that six months was more than enough rural work for their liking.[64]

Certainly the work—the vast bulk of it on the land—was hard. Discipline seems to have been severe, the daily routine punishing. But, as another English visitor (no right-winger in his views) commented in 1935, what freedom was there on the dole?[65] At RAD camp 9/165 (Beiersfeld/Erzgebirge), the day was to consist of:

0445	Get up
0450	Gymnastics
0515	Wash; make beds
0530	Coffee
0550	Parade
0600	March to building site; eight hours work with 30 minutes for breakfast
1500	Lunch
1530	Drill for two and a half hours
1820	Instruction
1845	Mending and cleaning
1915	Parade
1930	Announcements
1945	Supper
2000	Sing-song, etc
2200	Lights out.

For this, an angry socialist complained, you got 25 pfennigs a day.[66] The purpose of this routine, though, was precisely to inculcate a sense of labour as a communal service to the nation. In this, the RAD exemplified a strand within Nazism that can be described as 'agrarian romanticism': wishing to turn away from the immoral values and social disintegration of industrialism, they sought the materials for the Third Reich in the moral code and social solidarity of an agrarian past.

Women's labour service was also adapted by the new regime for its own purposes.[67] There were some 10,000 women volunteers in the FAD in August 1933, and a mere 7,347 in the following January when the Nazis established a separate women's administration, the *Deutscher Frauenarbeitsdienst*, and the volunteers were expected to spend part of their thirteen- to twenty-six-week service either with farmers or with land settlers. As with men the scheme shifted from its sole preoccupation with unemployment; DFAD increasingly turned its attentions to stemming rural depopulation and women's rejection of domestic service. In April 1936, DFAD was replaced by the Arbeitsdienst für die weibliche Jugend (Young Women's Labour Service) and reintegrated into the Reichsarbeitsdienst; despite the hopes of Hierl, though, women's labour service remained voluntary; the number of *Arbeitsmädschen* grew steadily, reaching 36,000 by the time the Second World War broke out; by this date the number of unemployed women was said to be around 34,000. Essentially the scheme had been rerouted, towards support for the Nazis' ideological goals: first, it served to prevent young women from entering directly into the waged labour market and instead to socialize them into a primarily domestic role; second, through placing women with farmers and settlers, it furthered the Nazis' agrarian romanticism. It did little of course to smooth industry's recruitment of a skilled and competent labour force.

It is perhaps not to be expected that RAD would be widely resisted. Arbeitsdienst was already well-established by the time of the Nazi seizure of power. Initially critical, the Social Democrats and free trade unions both dropped their opposition to FAD in 1932; as municipal finances came under increasing pressure, social democratic strongholds

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like Hamburg supported FAD because its costs were born by central treasury funding. Nor were the communists able to organize effectively against FAD, particularly in the residential camps where workers were isolated from the urban areas.[68] Even before 1931, there had been strong opposition to any form of labour service from the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands; the KPD was perhaps the most committed of all western communist parties to the view that the world economic crisis would inevitably radicalize the working class, and that in the meantime the unemployed movement would play a central role in the struggle against the capitalist state. With the foundation of FAD, the Communists' youth wing launched a campaign against labour service; there were also some protests, apparently spontaneous, within the camps.[69] Under the Nazi order, though, the KPD's main priority was survival.

As in many other fields of social and economic policy, the Nazis simply consolidated what already existed and drew it into the wider framework of the Third Reich. Is this, then, enough to explain the apparent popularity of the Arbeitsdienst programme, at least among young men? The answer, I believe, is no. As Arbeitsdienst moved away from its relief work origins, it acquired a powerful sense of social and political purpose that was entirely lacking in the British and Canadian systems. RAD was far more than a relief scheme, nor was it low-profile reconditioning. An English visitor reported in 1935 that the men sang the 'Horst Wessell Lied' during the morning flag parade and heard political lectures (mainly on military matters and the Nazi *Weltanschauung*) during Instruction; he concluded that Arbeitsdienst had been 'given a far more purposeful and integral part in the education of the youth by the present regime'.[70] By the late 1930s each member swore a personal oath of loyalty and obedience to 'the leader of the German Reich and the German Volk'.[71] By 1936, RAD was considered sufficiently important for its members to parade—shovels shouldered like rifles—in the Parteitag.[72] This episode typifies a more general truth: undoubtedly RAD's ideological cohesiveness also involved a unique degree of militarization.

For Party leaders, RAD's purpose was clear. Goebbels claimed 'that it is the mission of the National Socialist Labour Service to lift men out

of economic interest, out of acquisitiveness, to free them from materialism, from egoism, from the spirit of liberal interest-thoughts and Marxian internationalism'.[73] This mission was to be accomplished through what Party leaders articulated as 'soldierly' values. A visitor from the South Yorkshire WEA was told in 1933 that the field-grey uniform was considered 'too military and the colour was to be changed'.[74] By 1936, the doubts of foreign liberals could be ignored: members of the Arbeitsdienst were heralded as 'soldiers of labour' at the Reichsparteitag.[75] Did RAD's own members internalize these values? If camp workers in the democracies might feel it wiser to conceal grievances, it was much more difficult for German dissidents to record any misgivings about labour service. There is some evidence—for example in the reports of underground Socialist party agents—that not all was quite as the government liked to claim. One man was quoted in an SPD report as saying that 'When we were discharged, one could say that while the majority of the comrades had not become conscious anti-fascists, they had at least become embittered and rebellious anti-Nazis.'

The discipline, drill, and occasional pointless tasks all annoyed the workers; worst of all, as ever, 'the food was completely inadequate'.[76] A report from Saxony claimed that 'In some camps... the students and intellectually superior people are grouped together in separate troops. They get easier work and are not bullied as much.'[77] While we would not expect to find much in the way of organized protest, there was at least some, possibly a great deal, of grumbling in the ranks.

Nevertheless, RAD rapidly came to be regarded as one of the government's great successes. Foreign visitors would tour its camps, many coming away full of admiration at the cross-class participation and sincere evidence of fellow-feeling that they saw. Nazi glorification of work, and of the worker, was here translated into a form of public service that all too obviously served the national interest, and was carried out with pride. It is difficult not to conclude that service in RAD, as in the CCC, was attractive to many young men at the ideological and psychological levels because it allocated them an identity and role, inflated to the status of soldier of the nation or conqueror of the frontier, that would

have been denied them as digits in the unemployment line.

Contrasts and similarities

All work camp systems involved a pedagogy of labour, but not in the same ways. Even though the nature of the work showed remarkable similarities—consisting largely of digging, chopping and carrying in remote settings—the meanings attached to it varied enormously; and so did the nature of the learning which was supposed to arise, and the extent to which planned learning was achieved in practice. For all the great differences in the political order which gave rise to them, there is much that is similar in DAD and CCC. Both were mass organizations of comparable scale, state-run and possessed of a strong moral mission, deriving from their pioneering role and contribution to national reconstruction. Both fitted into an ideology which glorified, albeit to different extents and within divergent philosophical frameworks, the values of labour and of organic rural society; both recruited young men (women were involved in FAD and RAD, but generally on a non-residential basis). Despite particular grievances, both were genuinely popular and witnessed no outbreaks of organized protest, let alone systematic campaigns for boycott or closure. And both could be spoken of with pride by political leaders and participants. RAD and the CCC were expressions of alternative ways of living, in which the unemployed were not only hailed as valued contributors but were pioneering the learning which would have to be undertaken by society as a whole if it was to be transformed into the new moral world.

Such lofty aspirations had no place in the British and Canadian systems. The Canadian relief camps, like the instructional centres in Britain, were frankly reparative, and tacitly punitive. In both cases, significant sections of the political élites regarded the camps as a desirable solution to the problems of large-scale unemployment; but it was never possible to construct a coalition of popular support. Rather, the camps were roundly disliked by many of those who were expected to enter them; and this dislike, reinforced rather than weakened by popular

attitudes towards the camps, turned into widespread alienation once the authorities were seen not to be delivering on the one remaining trade-off which could have justified the experience—a job at the end. Alienation was accompanied by widespread organized protest, most seriously in Canada where the wider labour movement was sympathetic towards the RCWU and critical of the camps.

The most significant variables seem not to be the differing 'economic realities' of the four systems which are studied here. Indeed, economic rationality seems to have played an insignificant part in all four cases.[78] No more helpful in explaining variations were the conventional social policy goals, in their immediate impact at least: Canada and the USA developed camps as a means of giving relief, whereas in Britain and Germany they were superimposed over existing benefits schemes. More significant seems to have been the extent to which non-economic policy goals coincided or could coexist with the values and aspirations of the trainees (and, by extension, of those parts of the working class more broadly with whom they were in some cultural contact). Consent from the governed, in a remote residential setting, was vital; so, for men whose unemployment was a source of shame, was 'education of the identity'. Where the unemployed trainee felt himself subjected to more humiliation, in conditions of increased dependency, and all to no good purpose, withdrawal or rebellion were probable; where he felt himself the mighty and productive trooper of a new moral order he seems to have been more likely to identify with the system of which he was a part.[79]

10

Labour in the Historiography of Adult Education

Fancy concepts are always misleading. They suggest that the world can be neatly packaged, when the last thing which is susceptible to simple categorizations is the communicative, interactive and interpretive behaviour of humanity. I have tried to show that 'the pedagogy of labour' can display enormous variation even within one organizational form, the remote residential institution under state control. Ultimately, I believe that the explanation of this diversity lies to a great extent in the extent to which camp systems were perceived as legitimate by government, administrators, public opinion, and camp inmates. This in turn seems to rest upon the existence of a shared vision of the future which the system was to serve; and, by implication, an acceptance by all parties that the camps were a plausible and legitimate means of achieving—or striving for—that better world. I would suggest that the achievement of such a future-oriented consensus is, in our own times, probably only possible under crisis conditions. Yet no educational practice can take place without some conception, if only implicit, of the future.

Education has, since the Enlightenment, had at least a dual function. It has been concerned with emancipation: with the freeing of its subjects—in the classic formulations, for example French jacobinism and British radicalism, freeing them from the chains of 'ignorance' and 'superstition'—through the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding. Hence the common coupling, 'liberal education': an education appropriate for a free person. Education has also been concerned with reproduction: with the socialization of its subjects into the existing social order and its moral codes, and distributing them to

appropriate occupational roles. In more recent times, education has also served to distinguish and sort individuals, usually through the qualifications which it offers; and in our own time it has even become a consumer good, part of the seemingly endless market for personal services which is characteristic of contemporary capitalism. Almost by definition, though, the pedagogy of labour has little to do with education's function as consumption good: at present, work is what you use your purchasing power to avoid. However, it is certainly true that the pedagogy of labour is now used to sort the population, with the increasing availability of formal qualifications which may be earned through experiential learning within work.[1]

It becomes difficult, though, to envisage the pedagogy of labour as emancipation. Work in our culture is still largely contraposed to the values of self-fulfillment and autonomy. If free labour is still regarded as more necessity than freedom, how can we possibly suppose that work camps helped the human struggle for freedom and dignity, equality and justice? Certainly, educational theory and practice are oriented towards a future state—both towards the state of being of the individual subjects after their education but also the condition in times to come of human society. Education only makes sense as an activity which makes assumptions and claims about the future. Is this sufficient, though, for it to play a positive and emancipatory role? Rather, the fate of the pedagogy of labour seems to have been to socialize people to conform, to accept their subjection rather than to challenge it. This has not, though, been the case at all times: some of the German camp movements, for example, have been rightly described as 'search movements'[2] which explored new ways of living and of community-building, some of them downright utopian.

Socialization, of course, is normally associated with the family first, and with school second. It is partly for this reason that educational theory and practice are chiefly concerned with the young. They are, though, not exclusively concerned with young people: in 1794, for example, Condorcet proposed public education for adults as part of the new, revolutionary French education system. One of the most important beliefs characteristic of modernity is that no single dosage of knowledge and

skills will last an individual throughout a lifetime. The reasons for this are, first, that perceived change increasingly occurs at such a rapid pace, and over such a range of human existence, that skills and knowledge need constant updating; and secondly, that far from experiencing a predictable and routine fate individuals encounter opportunities for both self- and other-generated change so extensive that new demands are constantly made for learning and adaptation and change. The education of adults is, then, bound up with the wider post-Enlightenment view of education as a form of social practice which is uniquely concerned with the future.

Hence the problematizing of what I have called 'the pedagogy of labour'. Vocational education has been rather badly dealt with by British historians; and this account has sought to fill an empirical gap. It is a gap which I find extraordinary: the British labour camps are hardly well-known! It is even stranger, given the salience of vocational education and training in policy debate and policy analysis, not only in Britain but throughout the old industrial nations, including the emergent democracies of eastern Europe.

Much research into the history of adult education, particularly in Britain, has been guided by one of two well established paradigms, both of them broadly familiar in the sociology of education more generally.[3] The first, educational progressivism, is what might be called a parallel to the 'Whig' view of history, closely related in its unspoken assumptions to functionalist sociology. It seeks to relate, for example, the steady development of something called 'training', which of course in turn is treated in a value-laden way as a positive contributor to economic and social growth; others have considered the contribution of mechanics' institutes or scientific societies to the Industrial Revolution. Although often empirically of enormous interest,[4] such studies are epistemologically value-laden in a false-naive kind of way, presenting such categories as 'knowledge', 'economic growth' or 'scientific progress' for example as unquestioned (and unquestionable) goods. Their empirical strengths are also counterbalanced by an unwillingness to consider critically the educational forms which are the subject of analysis: for example, what power relations operated within the mechanics' institutes to constitute

them as 'institutional empires'? Frequently they are also limited to the micro-level of enquiry.

The second highly influential tradition in the English language is the *marxisant* historiography of writers such as Brian Simon. At their best, these writers have produced critical studies which are inspired at the macro-level by broadly Marxist categories of analysis, taking as their focus such areas as the relationship between social class and educational forms, alternative practice in adult education, or the role of the state in determining educational policy. Again they have produced findings of enormous significance, and are undoubtedly conceptually more sophisticated than most work in the progressivist tradition.[5] But in my view they are flawed, or more accurately limited, by the reductionism of the Marxist conceptual framework. Their monofocal preoccupation with social class (for example, 'alternative' educational practice is invariably that of the workers' movement) can produce blindness towards the ways that other sources of alternative thinking, and ways of 'learning to be other', emerge elsewhere within the social formation: Marxism itself is surely a classical example of such utopian thought, presented routinely as exemplifying the 'scientific' and 'progressive'.

The broadly Marxist tradition, like the progressivist, has yet to question its concept of 'progress'. It appears to understand social change within a 'labour-movement paradigm', seeing workers' struggles as the primary source of and vehicle for a new social order; yet it has asked remarkably few questions, empirical or theoretical, about the extent to which workers can and do 'learn a way out' through the labour movement and its institutional forms. It is worth asking what difference the definite article makes: are we talking about 'the labour movement', which then follows a sequential and teleological trajectory through time, or about a plurality of workers' movements, each with a specific history and ecology which can change and rupture over time? Further, its concealed value framework leads the Marxist tradition to regard certain subjects as inherently negative: examples include the role of the state, which ultimately is always reduced to that of expanding capital accumulation and legitimating the capitalist mode of production;[6] vocational

education requires no study at all, quite obviously, since it is merely an expression of capitalism's need for increased valorization of labour power. Nor has the *marxisant* historiographical tradition problematized such curricular issues as relations between educational practice and changing individual identities, a question which is receiving sustained attention from feminist scholars for example.

Feminism has established a new agenda for educational researchers, as of course for practitioners.[7] In the British context, feminist scholarship has emerged in close association with the Marxist tradition, but it seems to me to have encouraged a considerably more open-minded approach which is tolerant of, and indeed actively seeks to understand, diversity. Understandably, its early achievements in the historical study of the education of adults in Britain have been concerned with exploring the reproduction of gender relations[8] through the socialization of adult women, or recovering the hidden history of counter-hegemonic struggles[9] by women from different social classes. In that this development has taken on the methodological gains of the critical historians, but also been more able to handle diversity, it is welcome. It has also opened up the exploration of empirical fields previously left to the progressivists, including research into curriculum areas such as vocational education.[10] Whether feminism's impact on scholarship will be substantially reinforced by that of other new social movements — for example, environmentalism, the gay men's movement, or the peace movement — remains an open question; my hope is, of course, that it will be.

From the above, clearly I would identify this study with the emerging tradition of critical scholarship. This I take to be inherently eclectic: informed by critical Marxism but aware of its shortcomings; excited by the questions with which educationalists are being confronted by the new social movements; and concerned to explore evidence of human realities rather than rejecting empiricism wholly. Reinforcing this eclecticism is, I think, an acceptance of ambiguity and diversity in the structures of power and resistance in the social order: even in late capitalism, there are many sources of authority and power, and multiple sources of countervailing social energy which may generate routes for 'learning to be' in

ways which do not simply replicate existing subordination.

Thus in respect of the British work camps, and of parallel systems elsewhere, I have tried to show that the existing state-managed forms did not simply exemplify an attempt to expand capital accumulation. Rather, in each case ideological motives predominated, concerned to construct a future male labour force in the image of the male labour force which was recalled from the past, whose qualities were physical fitness, observance of routine, obedience, and (especially in Germany and the USA but also in Canada and Britain) a commitment to rural life; and to restore the female worker to the domestic sphere (of work, but non-waged). On any rational-technical projection of 'capital's requirements' this was a nonsense; capital was recruiting semi- and unskilled workers by the tens of thousands, not to dig, lift and carry but to serve behind counters, to assemble parts, to type letters....

Equally I have tried, at least in its cruder forms, to reject or at least qualify the view that camp systems were concerned with legitimating the capitalist mode of production. Clearly there is a sense in which this is true, since all labour-market policy is invariably intended to strengthen the existing order and protect it from crises, and not to destabilize it altogether; and this may be particularly true of crisis situations such as the Great Crash. Yet what is remarkable here is the extent to which anti-industrial motivations were at work. The future-oriented views of policy-makers showed strong traces of agrarian romanticism, with its vision of an organic social order in close contact with the land. Since this was not bound up with an explicit rejection of industrial society as such, it was hardly anti-capitalist; but neither was it a crude shoring up of capitalism's credibility, and it opened up space for more explicitly non-capitalist thinking.

This was so even in Britain, where the Ministry of Labour reached a modus vivendi with the Grith Fyrd movement. Grith Fyrd (the name was Anglo-Saxon for 'Peace Army') was founded by members of the League of Woodcraft Chivalry, a middle-class proto-Green movement which was closely associated with such youth initiatives as the Forest School and the Woodcraft Folk.[11] Its purpose was consciously to take 'men and

women in a measure right out of the industrial system', and build self-sustaining communities on the land in order to foster through independent labour 'some of the spirit of adventure which not only sustains pioneers in the pressing ordeals of primitive conditions, but cultivates the endurance needed for any kind of successful economic settlement'.[12]

With financial support from Quakers (including Barrow Cadbury) and educational progressives (such as Michael Sadler), Grith Fyrd opened its first camp in spring 1932, at Godshill in the New Forest; a second was opened in mid Derbyshire in the following summer.[13] After some investigation (there was some concern lest Grith Fyrd turned out to be fascists), the Ministry of Labour agreed to allow unemployed pioneers to continue receiving benefits (which they paid over to Grith Fyrd).[14] Perhaps a similar venture larger than the Grith Fyrd's two camps would not have been countenanced by the ministry; such experimentation was, in Britain, clearly marginal. Nonetheless, it was possible, and probably because Grith Fyrd's non-industrial goals and values were compatible with the rural romanticism of significant élite circles.

This compatibility was far greater in the case of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the pre- and post-1933 Arbeitsdienst, both of which were on an immeasurably larger scale than the tiny Grith Fyrd movement. The depth of enthusiasm for RAD and CCC raises further questions, though, about the existence of a probable connection between age and gender on the one hand and the legitimacy of work camp systems on the other. Where the pedagogy of labour in remote settings had greatest legitimacy—in Germany and the USA—it assumed cultural forms which might be expected to appeal to young men. These were, I think, also present in the Grith Fyrd movement's talk of 'adventure' and 'pioneers', not to say its chosen identity as an 'army', and for the movement's founders this was explicit: Grith Fyrd provided experience of 'joy and adventure without war',[15] satisfying human instincts which had been suppressed 'in the town life of an industrial community'.[16] Was this exclusively a male problem? This seems unlikely, of course, but it is nonetheless striking, if not entirely surprising, that the search for alternative identities was rooted so firmly in predominantly masculine values.

While it may be disturbing to find such powerful similarities between a Nazi programme, a New Deal campaign and a British counter-cultural movement, the role of gender in the inter-war years in creating a popular constituency for 'pioneering' camp movements should not be underestimated.

Not one, but many pedagogies of labour had emerged by the late 1930s. Gryth Fyrd offered a pedagogy of labour that was consciously conceived as an alternative to that of the Ministry of Labour, resting on a common 'fellowship' and building a new humanity. Nazism offered yet another utopian pedagogy of labour, resting on 'comradeship' and national reconstruction. Ironically, Nazism and Grith Fyrd shared a more positive and optimistic pedagogy of labour than did the civil servants of Britain's Ministry of Labour; for the former, work had an almost mystical, purifying effect which was at some distance from the pragmatism of the 'reconditioning' movement of the latter.

Reconditioning was, of course, a product of its own place and time. To reduce the transfer instructional centres to an expression of 'the needs of capital' is as uninformative as it would be to see them as a 'step' along the path to a 'modern' British training 'system'. Yet, although the cruder forms of the 'legitimation' and 'labour valorization' arguments can be ruled out, the constituency for work camps did have a relationship to the critical phase of industrial development after the First World War. This is complex; and it affected the non-capitalist Soviet Union, with its extensive network of semi-penal labour camps, as much as the capitalist states of the 'West'. Work camps after all were compatible with the systems of mass labour management that emerged particularly strongly after the First World War, and were known collectively as 'Taylorism' or 'Fordism'. Taken together with the known bourgeois constituency for a policy of enforced labour by the unemployed in the West (and the Party constituency for penal labour in the USSR), and the potential popular constituency for 'pioneer' movements, this raises the question of why work camp movements largely died out after 1945. It has been shown here that the British system was still going strong, and indeed expanding as late as 1939, and that there were attempts to keep the CCC going through the war. Clearly

the system had a great deal of momentum behind it.

Here legitimation theory has much to commend it. After 1945 labour camps evoked Nazism on the one side, and Stalinism on the other. The absence of labour camp systems in the West, and their eventual abandonment in the East, was a contributory part of a process of legitimation of the state, rather than of the capitalist (or communist) mode of production. Yet I would argue that more important still were the implosive tendencies inherent in work camp systems. Remote residential institutions contain the potential for extremely close-knit social organization among inmates, which in turn impedes attempts at total management of the inmates' behaviour; hence the need for some level, probably quite substantial, of consent from inmates. In turn, though, the inmates expect pay-offs; in explicitly penal institutions these may be fairly minor, since inmates will themselves accept the principles of justice contained in the element of punishment. In a work camp, though, inmates who have been unemployed (and, in a work-based society, have therefore experienced unemployment as a humiliation) will reasonably expect that their pay-off will be an identity transformation. In normal circumstances they will expect this to be the finding of a job, and in its absence will lapse into apathy, alienation and even outright resentment against the camp system; in crisis circumstances, but probably only for limited periods of say a few years, identity transformation can plausibly include the role of agent of social change. This is, however, dependent upon the extent to which individuals are willing to forego their personal self-identity and merge it, if only for a fixed time, in the construction of a common and shared identity.

This returns us to the pedagogy of labour and its relationship with visions of a desirable future. If my argument is right, the congruence of vision which underlay Arbeitsdienst and the CCC afforded them a degree of legitimacy which was denied to the British and Canadian work camp systems. Yet that legitimacy was, I argue, fragile, resting upon a temporary coalition of interests that would not have outlived a crisis situation. This was the case for the pedagogy of labour in these remote, residential institutions, the work camps, in the inter-war years. However, the

legitimacy of the education system more broadly is a living and continuing issue in a society which has as many reasons to be concerned for its common future, and is placing correspondingly high expectations upon that education system. Work too is in a crisis of its own, and everyone looks to education to help sort it out. That too is a kind of utopianism. But which kind of utopianism it is—whether foolish fantasy or creative vision—is still, of course, not entirely clear.

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The source for the Bourne dismissals is a ministerial reply, in Parliamentary Debates, 19 Mar 1936, which shows that of 897 men leaving camps in the three months up to and including Feb 1936, 595 left voluntarily, and only 54 were dismissed for misconduct (the largest single group being the 15 from Bourne). The remainder either found work (79 men) or fell ill (169).

5 W.Hannington, *Ten Lean Years* (London, Gollancz, 1940), 187–91; Parliamentary Debates, 17 Nov 1938; 16, 23 Mar 1939.

6 Hill and Lubin (1934), 101.

7 Interview, William Dunseath

8 N. Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927–1941* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 110–29. P. Kingsford, *The Hunger Marchers in Britain, 1920–1940* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1982); W. Hannington (1936). These are now largely superseded by Richard Croucher, *We Refuse to Starve in Silence: a history of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1920–1940* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987). These accounts are all relatively sympathetic to the goals of the NUWM, but Croucher's is by far the most informative.

9 Bill Moore, *All Out* (Sheffield City Libraries, 1985).

10 R .Harrison and P. Seyd, 'An Interview with Len Youle', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 20 (1970), 35–41.

11 Quoted in Kingsford (1982), 117.

12 Cabinet, Unemployment. Provision of Training, Memorandum by Minister of Labour, Feb 1932, PRO, LAB 2/1280.

13 W. Hannington, *Why We Are Marching* ([np], 1930).

14 Kingsford (1982), 137–8.

15 Branson (1985), 17–51.

16 Hannington (1936), 300–1.

17 *The Q*, May 1933. (I owe this reference to Stephen Williams.)

18 *Unemployed Women and the Slave Bill*, National Unity Congress and Working Women Pamphlet no 1, [1934], 4, 7.

19 *Manifesto of the National Hunger March and Congress*, [1934], 1.

20 *Exposure of Belmont Slave Colony*, [1934], 16.

21 *Unemployed Leader*, May 1934.

22 Kingsford (1982), 203.

23 Hannington(1936), 303.

24 For example, *Unemployed Leader*, May 1934, Oct 1934.

25 *Daily Worker*, 7 Jan, 1 Feb 1935.

26 *Daily Worker*, 28 Mar, 8 Apr 1935.

27 *Daily Worker*, 13, 21 Mar, 9, 23 Apr, 30 May 1935.

28 *Daily Worker*, 25 Mar, 3 Apr, 30 Apr, 8 May, 18 May, 1935.

29 Various correspondence, 9 Dec, 11 Dec 1933, 15 Jan, 16 Jan, 9 Mar 1934, PRO, LAB 2/1286, ET 6097/33.

30 Hannington (1936), 312.

31 Hannington (1936), 310; *Daily Worker*, 1 Feb 1935.

32 UAB, *Annual Report* 1935, 269.

33 UAB, Training and Welfare Sub-Committee, W. Eady to M. Reynard, 11 Dec 1936, Markham Papers, 7.11, British Library of Political and Economic Science.

34 W. McShane, 'Unemployment and Instructional Centres', *Discussion*, Jan 1937, 28.

35 For example, *Unemployed Leader*, May 1934; Hannington (1936), 301.

36 For example, 'New dangers in the field of unemployment', *Labour Monthly*, Sep 1939, 546–7.

37 Kingsford (1982), 225–6.

38 *Unemployed Leader*, Aug 1934.

39 N. Branson (1985), 78–82.

40 Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, 908–23.

41 *Daily Worker*, 3 Jan 1935.

42 Davison (1929), 231.

43 W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners, 1919–1960* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1971), 276, 283.

44 *Daily Worker*, 6 May 1935.

45 Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, 971.

46 Memorandum, Distressed Areas: Withdrawal of benefit from men refusing to attend a Training Centre, 3 Feb 1930, PRO CAB 24; Agreement, Trades Union Congress/Ministry of Labour re. Transfer Instructional Centres, PRO, LAB 2/1276, ET 6333/30.

47 A. B. Graham to March, 22 Sep1930; Draft Memorandum on Training Policy and Trade Unions, PRO, LAB 2/1276.

48 Trades Union Congress, *Annual Report* 1935, 119.

49 Hannington (1937), 100–4; *Unemployed Leader*, Aug 1934.

50 *Hit Back—And Win, National Youth Congress Against War and Fascism* (London, [1934]), 11.

51 Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, 744–9, 1327–30.

52 T. Pickard, *Jarrow March* (London, Allison and Busby, 1982), 54–6.

53 E. Wilkinson (1939), 224–5.

54 Wilkinson (1939), 224.

55 Labour Party, *Annual Report* 1934, 222; 1939, 266–71.

56 Moore (1978), 64–80.

57 Edmondson; Hannington (1937), 104–5.

58 *Unemployed Leader*, Sep 1935.

59 *Unemployed Leader*, Oct 1934.

60 Hannington (1937), 104.

61 *Unemployed Leader*, Aug 1934.

62 Hannington (1937), 104.

63 William Dunseath, Interview.

64 *Ministry of Labour Instructional Centres* [1938], 7–8.

65 Wilkinson (1939), 224.

66 Wilkinson (1939), 224.

67 'Life at an Instructional Centre, Described by an Unemployed Worker', [nd], Markham Papers, 5/29.

68 'Life in a Scottish Instructional Centre', script of broadcast, 27 Feb 1936, Markham Papers, 5/29.

69 Hannington (1936), 107–9; Parliamentary Debates, 26 Mar 1936, 17 Nov 1938.

70 Wilkinson (1939), 225.

71 Lush (1941), 70.

72 Ministry of Labour, *Unemployment Insurance Acts: analytical guide...* (1931), 34.

73 See Table 6.1 above.

74 Heard, interview (1983), 164.

75 Gaukrodger, communication.

76 For the NUWM, work generally meant men's work. Although the NUWM had an organizer for activities with women unemployed, its criticisms of training for women as such seem to have been confined to the 1934–35 campaign; otherwise they were largely an appendage to the campaigns around men's training. For the 1934–35 criticisms see Anon (the author was possibly Maud Brown, the NUWM women's organizer), *Unemployed Women and the Slave Bill* (National Unity Congress, [1934?]), especially 4–5; *Daily Worker*, 30 Mar, 27 Apr 1935.

77 A slightly more detailed account of Grith Fyrd is given in Chapter 10 below.

9: Comparisons and Contrasts

1 Royal Institute of International Affairs (1935), 317; International Labour Organisation, *The Bulgarian Law on Compulsory Labour* (Geneva, ILO, 1920), 2–4.

2 J. R. Green, *The World of the Worker: labor in twentieth-century America* (New York, Hill and Wang,1980), 135.

3 *Canada Year Book*, 1932, 657.

4 A. M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt* (3 vols, Boston, Heinemann, 1960), III, 428–9; Labour Gazette (Canada), June 1932.

5 J. P. Belshaw, 'Post-war unemployment policy in New Zealand', *Economic Record* 9 (Jun 1933), 59–64.

6 Belshaw, 66.

7 Belshaw, 71.

8 *Labour Gazette* [Canada], Mar, Jun 1932; see also the McDonald Report on the administration and management of the camps, reprinted in R. Liversedge (ed V. Hoar), *Recollections of the On To Ottawa Trek* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 125–6.

9 J. A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1932–1942: a New Deal case study* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1967), 5.

10 For example Belshaw (1933), 73.

11 *Labour Gazette* [Canada], Nov 1932; V. Hoar, 'Introduction', in Liversedge (1973), viii.

12 *Labour Gazette* [Canada], Mar 1933.

13 Department of National Defence [Canada], *Annual Report* 1933, 59.

14 Department of National Defence, *Annual Report* 1934, 7.

15 Salmond (1967), 31, 45.

16 For example *Labour Gazette* [Canada], Mar 1933.

17 *Final Report of the National Employment Commission* (Ottawa, 1938), 14.

18 Department of National Defence, *Annual Report*, 1937, 108.

19 *Canada Year Book*, 1940, 764, 768.

20 Salmond (1967), 209–16.

21 I. Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: a history* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 73–80.

22 *Labour Gazette* [Canada], Jun 1933.

23 *Labour Gazette* [Canada], Oct 1933.

24 Liversedge (1973), xv.

25 Liversedge (1973), 41–3.

26 Liversedge's eye-witness acount, while clearly partial, remains the most substantial description of the Trek, and I have relied heavily on it. The published version includes extracts from other source materials.

27 Liversedge, 129.

28 Liversedge, 138–45.

29 Department of Labour [Canada], *Annual Report* 1936, 78; International Labour Organisation, *Planning of Public Works in Relation to Employment* (Geneva, ILO, 1937), 168.

30 Salmond (1967), 133, 186.

31 Salmond, 133, 181.

32 Salmond, 114–6.

33 Salmond, 61–7.

34 Salmond, 102–12.

35 War Department [USA], *Civilian Conservation Corps Regulations* (1937), 7.

36 *CCC Regulations*, 125–7, 130–2.

37 Salmond (1967), 50–4.

38 Green (1980), 137–8; I. Howe and L. Coser, *The American Communist Party: a critical history* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1974), 192–7.

39 Labor Research Association, *Labor Fact Book*, 1934, 122.

40 *Labor Fact Book*, 1934, 124; 1936, 188.

41 Howe and Coser (1974), 329–37; H. Hudson, *Black Worker in the Deep*

South: a personal account (New York, International Publishers, 1972), 52–8.

42 Public Works Department [New Zealand], *Public Works Workers' Agreements* (Wellington, 1936), 4, 15.

43 S. Gray in J. MacKinolty (1981), 62–3; see also in the same volume N. Wheatley, '"The Disinherited of the Earth"?', 27–41, for the role of the UWM in New South Wales.

44 For the early period of labour service, covering the entire Weimar period and the first two years of the Nazi government, the best source is now P. Dudek, *Erziehung durch Arbeit. Arbeitslagerbewegung und Freiwilliger Arbeitsdienst, 1920–1935* ['Instruction through Work: the work camp movement and voluntary labour service, 1920–1935'] (Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988). When Dudek's volume reached Britain, in late 1990, it was sadly too late for me to have made as much use of it as I would have have liked. In addition see W. Benz, 'Vom Freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst zur Arbeitsdienstpflicht', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 16 (1968), 317–9; for a brief but suggestive contemporary British report see *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, Jun 1924.

45 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, May 1925; Dudek (1988), 55.

46 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, Feb 1931.

47 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, Jun 1931; Bajohr (1980), 332.

48 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, Sep 1931.

49 R. A. Brady, *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism* (London, Gollancz, 1937), 165.

50 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, Sep 1931; Royal Institute of International Affairs, (1935), 316; Bajohr (1980), 335–6; Dudek (1988), ch 7.

51 E. Harvey, 'Youth unemployment and the state: public policies towards unemployed youth in Hamburg during the world economic crisis', in R. J. Evans and D. Geary (eds), *The German Unemployed: experiences and consequences of mass unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (Beckenham, Croom Helm, 1987), 159–61; Bajohr (1980), 337.

52 Dudek (1988), 174; Harvey in Evans and Geary (1987), 158.

53 Royal Institute of International Affairs (1935), 316; D. Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: class and status in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 63, 178.

54 Dudek (1988), 252.

55 Royal Institute of International Affairs (1934), 316.

56 Dudek (1988), 174.

57 Quoted in Schoenbaum (1980), 63.

58 In J. Noakes and G. Pridham, *Nazism, 1919–1945, Volume 2: State, Economy and Society, 1933–39. A Documentary Reader* (University of Exeter, 1984), 354.

59 E. Fisher, 'Our German summer school', *Outlook*, 1 Oct 1933.

60 Schoenbaum (1980), 79.

61 *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, Aug 1935.

62 J. Hiden and J. Farquharson, *Explaining Hitler's Germany: historians and the Third Reich* (London, Batsford, 1983), 134–7.

63 Schoenbaum (1980), 80.

64 J. E. Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: the NSDAP and agriculture in Germany, 1928–45* (Sage, 1976), 141–55; D. Conte, 'Ceti rurale e salvezza della nazione: l'ideologia del "Bauerntum" nella Germania Weimariana', *Studi Storici* 28 (1987), 347–84; Schoenbaum (1980), 167.

65 G. Gough, 'Labour Service and Public Service Camps in Germany', *Highway*, Jan 1935, 104. The *Highway* was the monthly journal of the Workers' Educational Association, and tended to be left of centre in its editorial policy.

66 Noakes and Pridham (1984), 356; see also the similar routine reprinted in Brady (1937), 168–9. Dudek (1988) suggests, with examples, that there was considerable change between 1932 and 1933, with daily routines becoming considerably more organized and regulated by the latter date: see 237–8.

67 This section draws on Bajohr (1980), 340–9; Dudek (1988), 209–13.

68 Harvey (1987), 160–4.

69 Dudek (1988), 226.

70 Gough (1935), 105.

71 Brady (1937), 169.

72 *Reichsparteitag der Arbeit* (Berlin, 1936).

73 Quoted in Brady (1937), 170.

74 Fisher (1933).

75 *Reichsparteitag der Arbeit* (1936).

76 In Noakes and Pridham (1984), 355.

77 In Noakes and Pridham, 356.

78 This is the thrust of Bajohr's argument.

79 Barrington Moore is, I believe, wrong to to argue on the basis of animal research that 'it is safe to conclude' that dependency and deprivation in concentration camps served 'to speed up the processes of adaptive learning' (*Injustice*, 66). If there is a sense in which this is true, the 'adaptive learning' was generally quite the opposite of the intentional learning goals of the institution, and it included learning how to resist and withdraw: what is learnt is not the same as what is taught. It is also worth noting here that Benz (1968), 346, understands compulsory Arbeitsdienst as a simple coercive measure, consistent with its role as part of the totalitarian state; this is to ignore the relatively substantial degree of consent which it nevertheless attracted, not only in the years before 1935. No-one knows yet—pace Paul Willis—how it is that at times, we learn to labour with such enthusiasm, while at other times we learn to resent our own work.

10: Labour in the Historiography of Adult Education

1 See J. Field, 'Competency and the Pedagogy of Labour', *Studies in the Education of Adults* 23 (1991), 1.

2 Dudek (1988), 11.

3 Much of this argument is well summarized in K. Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change: gender, class and power* (South Hadley, Mass, Bergin and Garvey, 1988), ch 2.

4 Illustrative of the gap is the fact that only one serious contemporary account exists of modern British training policy, J. Sheldrake and S. Vickerstaffe, *The History of Industrial Training in Britain* (Aldershot, Avebury, 1987). This work does not strengthen the case for ignoring training, or just leaving it to Business School historians.

5 Strong examples are the work of Roger Fieldhouse, including *Adult Education and the Cold War: liberal values under siege, 1946–1951* (University of Leeds, 1985); see also the representative collection by Marxist and marxisant writers edited by Brian Simon, *The Search for Enlightenment: the working class and adult education in the twentieth century* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1990).

6 But see the collection edited by R. Fieldhouse, *The Political Education of Servants of the State* (Manchester University Press, 1988).

7 See for example Weiler (1988).

8 See the work of the leading historian in this area, June Purvis, *Hard Lessons: the lives and education of working-class women in nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989).

9 Sadly, no study of women in 20th-century British adult education yet exists which compares with the several major studies of the 19th century. This gap is in the process of being mended by Gill Scott's forthcoming account of the Co-operative Women's Guild, and Mary Hughes' work on women in early 20th-century adult education.

10 For example W. G. Evans, 'The Welsh Intermediate and Technical Education Act 1889 and the education of girls: gender stereotyping or curricular assimilation?', *Llafur: Journal of Welsh Labour History* 5, 84–92.

11 The Order was inspired, at least in part, by the ideas of Ernest Thompson Seton, an Anglo-Canadian who also influenced Baden-Powell. Among his disciples was Aubrey Westlake, founder of the Order in 1916. See D. Prynn, 'The Woodcraft Folk and the Labour Movement, 1925–70', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983), 80. The story of Grith Fyrd is one I hope to return to elsewhere.

12 Management Committee of Grith Fyrd to Treasury, Aug 1933, PRO, LAB 23/19; and the many articles placed in sympathetic labour movement journals such as G. Keeling, 'Grith Fyrd Camps', *Highway*, Apr 1934, and J. J. Mallon, 'A "Peace Army" takes the field', *Labour Magazine* 11 (Jan 1933).

13 Grith Fyrd, *Annual Report* 1933/34.

14 T. Howe, memorandum, 11 Feb 1935, PRO, LAB 23/19.

15 A. Westlake, 'Grith Fyrd as a movement of joy and adventure (without war)', in *The Grith Fyrd Idea* (Godshill, Woodcraft Way Series 19, 1933), 20.

16 J. MacMurray, 'The Grith Fyrd Idea', in *The Grith Fyrd Idea*, 6.

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Learning through Labour is the first scholarly study of the British work camps of the 1920s and 1930s. It locates the origins of central government interest in work camps in the years after the First World War. Motivated by 'imperial' considerations and the political need to reduce unemployment amongst ex-servicemen, the first work camps were intended to prepare men for migration to the white Dominions. In 1929 a national system of residential centres was opened to 'recondition' long-term unemployed men by exposing them to hard physical labour, a retraining programme which was still expanding in the late 1930s. A parallel programme on a smaller scale was developed to prepare unemployed women for work in the home, often as domestic servants. This study also offers comparisons with the far larger programmes developed in Germany, Canada and the United States. The British schemes were relatively small scale, and less politically sensitive. The Canadian scheme collapsed after a mass walk-out by trainees, while in Germany and the USA work camps were an important focus for attempts to rebuild nations damaged by unprecedented economic hardships. Yet throughout the developed world work was, and remains, central to human identity, especially for men. This study explores the role of work in the re-education of unemployed people who were judged to be at risk of congealing into a new and disturbing underclass.

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